

I WAS A SOVIET WORKER

# I WAS A SOVIET WORKER

ANDREW SMITH

AND SUPPLEMENTED BY  
MARIA SMITH

WITH AN APPENDIX OF  
PHOTOGRAPHS AND DOCUMENTS



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MAHARANA BHUPAL  
COLLEGE,  
UDAIPUR.

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## PREFACE

OUR sole purpose in telling the story of our three years' experience in the Soviet Union is to endeavour to give a true picture of the life and conditions of the Russian people under the Stalin régime.

That the truth about Russia has not been disclosed is due in part to the efforts of an active, well-organized propaganda machinery and in part to the misguided activities of well-intentioned but gullible individuals, who, without a knowledge of the Russian language, have visited the Soviet Union for a short period as tourists, and have accepted blindly the glowing accounts of the official bureaucracy and the pleasant scenes which have been carefully staged for their benefit.

We, too, were the innocent victims of this propaganda, which led us to give up our home and contribute our life-savings to the Communist movement here, in order to spend the remainder of our lives in the Soviet Union.

No one can charge that what we have to say about Russia is the result of prejudice. On the contrary, all of our prejudices were enthusiastically in favour of Soviet Russia.

During my entire adult life I have been an active revolutionary worker. For the past sixteen years I have been a loyal and active member of the Communist Party. My wife, too, was an active and devoted Communist Party member. We looked toward the Soviet Union as the beacon light of hope for suffering humanity.

Only those who have gone through our experiences can realize how bitter it is to have to reveal in all their terrible ugliness the true facts about the land in which we had placed

our greatest hopes. If our efforts will save others the disillusionment and heartbreak through which we have gone, then our experiences will not have been in vain.

We have tried to limit our narrative strictly to our own first-hand experiences in daily contact with the workers in the Soviet Union—I as a worker in the Elektrozavod electrical equipment factory and Maria as a housewife. In most cases we have used the real names of the persons and places with which we were in contact. Exceptions have been made only where this procedure might endanger the individuals involved.

We do not seek to give the impression that we ourselves suffered great hardships during our stay in the Soviet Union. We seek no sympathy on our own behalf. On the contrary, we must freely admit that we enjoyed unusual privileges, since I was treated as a foreign specialist. It was precisely these privileges which we enjoyed along with the Soviet bureaucracy, in the face of the most abject misery of the great mass of the Russian people, which aroused our intense dissatisfaction and moved us to the resolve that we would spare no effort to disclose the actual situation. It is for the Russian people in their deepest hour of trial and tribulation that we seek the help and sympathy which they so urgently need.

MARIA SMITH  
ANDREW SMITH

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# I WAS A SOVIET WORKER

## CHAPTER I

### MY EARLY CAREER AS A RADICAL

FROM boyhood on, my life and interests have been bound up with the cause of labour. At the age of twelve I was employed as a sweeper boy in an iron mine at Turshok, Hungary, where I toiled for twelve hours a day at *72 filler* (15 cents) per day. At eighteen I became a full-fledged miner, earning from 60 cents to a dollar per day.

In 1905, when I was but twenty-one years of age, I was already the leader of a strike of the miners of the Schalgotarian Steel Company, which owned the Schalgotarian iron mines in the northern part of Hungary.

The workers were protesting against the tactics of Vikisely, the mine superintendent, and his chief foreman, Trn. Workers were being heavily fined for a few minutes' tardiness and had to work without pay for the rest of the day. If any stones were found in a car of ore, they were not only fined, but received no pay for the entire car.

After two weeks, during which the entire plant was completely tied up, requiring the presence of two regiments of soldiers from Mishkolz, some of the chief men of the company came down from Budapest. All the miners were called to a meeting. The men demanded that Vikisely and Trn be fired and the system of fines be abolished. But the owners upheld their two subordinates, claiming that they were not to blame, that they were following out orders from the company in instituting the fines.

But we were determined to get rid of these two men, who were cordially hated by all the workers. We charged them

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with exacting presents from the workers and granting special privileges, even higher pay, to those who catered to them. The owners demanded proof, but no one dared to testify. Finally, I arose and stated that I could prove the charges.

"How do you know these charges are true?" demanded the president of the company.

"I know, because I myself carried presents to Mr. Vikisely!" I said. "Many times have I carried venison, rabbits and pheasants, which my father shot for him."

There was a loud hubbub in the hall and a burst of applause. My father was called to the platform. He corroborated my statement. Somewhat ashamed, he testified that he had received increased wages from Mr. Vikisely as a result. The president promised to remove the two officials as quickly as possible.

Although the strike was settled, Vikisely and Trn, who were to remain at least six months, until the firm could get new men to take their places, started a campaign of provocation against me. They could not take direct action against me for fear of a strike. They had me watched during the night shift, and charged me with taking some time off my lunch hour. I grew so angry when I heard this false statement that I hit the mine boss with my miner's lamp. Here was a good pretext, and the company had me transferred to another mine, from which I was soon discharged.

I was blacklisted in the entire industry. I wandered from town to town looking vainly for a job. After knocking about for two years, getting an odd job here and there as a labourer on a building or on road work, I finally decided to go to the United States. America to me then was the promised land, with opportunities for a steady job and a better life. That was my first migration.

In the meantime, during the strike meetings, I had heard Bokany and other Socialist speakers of the time. Inspired by their message, I joined the Social Democratic Party. I was active in the party in Hungary and headed the little group of Socialists who organized the union and were the leading

spirits in the strike. Thus I came to America already imbued with the doctrines of the Labour and Socialist Movements.

In 1907, at the age of twenty-three, I arrived at what is now known as Daisytown, Pennsylvania. I got a job as a miner in the Crescent Mine of the Pittsburgh Coal Company. I immediately joined the United Mine Workers of America and subscribed to the Slovak Socialist paper, *Rovnost Ludu* (*People's Equality*). I contributed articles to the paper and tried to build up a Socialist Party branch.

I was elected to the Mine Committee of the local. We built up the organization into one of the strongest, best-disciplined locals of the United Mine Workers of America. Along with five other Socialists on the Mine Committee, we established strict control over dead work, unreasonable discharges and rates of pay. Few dared to defy our union rules. The conditions of the workers were protected and our standards were among the best in the coal-fields.

Of course, the company did not relish this state of affairs. I was particularly the target of Boss Collins' resentment. He assigned me to the most hazardous and disagreeable work, where there was an abundance of slate and water. Nevertheless, through my skill and industry, I managed to equal the earnings of the other miners.

One day, as I was about to enter the shaft, I noticed a sign marked "Danger" blocking the entrance. It was against the law to remove this sign. Yet there was no visible sign of danger about. There was no gas or other hazard that I could discover.

I consulted my fellow-miners. They laughed and declared that it was obviously an attempt to put me on the spot. If I removed the sign I would be violating the law. If I allowed it to remain, I could not go to my work. They urged me to throw the damn thing down. I did, and I was fired.

The miners were thoroughly aroused and there was grave danger of a strike. I was reinstated after three days at another dangerous job, where there was considerable loose rock and there I worked for some time.

As a result of the depression in 1907 I lost my job and went to Uniontown. I finally secured employment in the coke region, in a mine at Oliver, Pennsylvania, owned by the Frick interests. My earnings were generally from one dollar to two dollars a day, sometimes ranging as high as three dollars on rare occasions. That job lasted only two or three months, so I turned to an employment agency in Pittsburgh for another. I was sent to Leechburg, Pennsylvania, where I secured employment as a common labourer in the plant of the Leechburg Steel Company, receiving 13 cents an hour.

A couple of months later my right leg was smashed by a yard crane in the plant, and I was laid up for about nine weeks in the Pittsburgh General Hospital.

At the hospital was another patient, a German woman, whose head had been caught in a laundry machine. To save her life an appeal was made by the hospital for someone to donate his skin for a grafting operation. I volunteered, and a large patch of skin was taken from my leg. The woman's life was saved. All the newspapers praised me and called me a hero. I was visited by many priests, especially the Protestants, who tried to enlist me as a propagandist among the miners and steel workers. They asked me to write for a Christian-Bohemian magazine and urged me to study for a church career. But this offer held no attraction for me.

When I left the hospital, the Leechburg Steel Company gave me a job as a foreman in the carpenter shop, where packing cases were made. It was easy work at two dollars per day. At that time I married. My wife was a Hungarian girl, who was working as a cook in Pittsburgh. Thinking that we could improve our condition, we returned to Daisy-town, where I got a job again in the Crescent Mine.

I was immediately elected as a member of the pit committee of the United Mine Workers local union. I also organized a Socialist Party branch and became its secretary. Because of my activity I became a popular figure among the miners and was elected Steward of the Owls' Club. Although

my standing among the miners was sufficiently strong to safeguard me from being fired, yet the company missed no opportunity to discriminate against me by giving me the worst-paid, most disagreeable and dangerous work in the mine. As soon as the slack period came, the company black-listed me and I could not get a job in Daisytown or anywhere in Pennsylvania. I decided to go to Cleveland.

In 1916 I obtained employment with the White Motor Company of Cleveland. They were at that time making army trucks for the Russian Imperial Government. My job was making cases in which these trucks were exported.

I joined the Slovak Branch of the Socialist Party in Cleveland and soon became its secretary. In 1917 I became a citizen. I also attended an evening technical school, where I studied to be a machinist. In 1917 I was elected Slovak organizer of the Western States' branches of the Socialist Party. This position I retained until I was elected General Secretary of the Slovak Workers' Society in 1926.

On May 1, 1919, I participated actively in the huge May Day demonstration in the city of Cleveland. About 25,000 to 30,000 people took part. The meeting was broken up by the police. One person was killed. I received a blow over the head from a policeman's club, the marks of which I carry to this very day. Ruthenberg, Wagenknecht and Baker, the leaders of the demonstration which was organized by the Socialist Party, were arrested. I was arrested at midnight on May 3rd, but was released later after an investigation by the police who were seeking to have me deported.

In 1919 the Socialist Party was split. Along with a group of Left Wing Socialists led by Charles E. Ruthenberg and inspired by the Russian Revolution, I joined the Communist Workers' Party which later became the Communist Party of the United States. I was a charter member of the latter organization until I left for my three years' stay in Russia. In 1932 I was a member of the Cleveland City Central Committee and was repeatedly elected as a delegate to national conventions of the Communist Party.

During all these years, my only interest in life was the radical movement. I gave no thought to matters of personal advancement, to general enjoyment or to family life. My wife was as much bound up in party matters as I was. We had no children. We were busy day and night for the cause. We had no interests outside of party circles and activities. When the Russian Revolution came, we thought that at last our ideals would be realized in at least one country. We read eagerly the glowing reports of progress in the Soviet Union. We listened to countless enthusiastic speeches about the building of Socialism. We hoped that one day we too would live in a land where there was real freedom, opportunity and happiness for the workers.

## CHAPTER II

### MY FIRST VISIT TO THE LAND OF PROMISE

At last an opportunity came to visit the Workers' Paradise, to see how the Russian workers and peasants were building up Socialism. I was selected by the Communist Party as a member of an American labour delegation to the Soviet Union. I was a member of the Machinists' Union of Cleveland, which was under Left Wing leadership at the time. I was also National Secretary of the Slovak Workers' Society.

The delegation was headed by Louis Hyman, a Russian of Jewish descent, who was the head of the Communist-controlled Needle Trades' Industrial Union. The delegation consisted of forty-eight members of which eight were members of the Communist Party. These eight constituted the Communist faction. Caroline Drew was the secretary of the Communist faction and the guiding hand of the show. This faction held numerous secret meetings during the trip in order to insure the proper direction of the delegation. The rest of the delegation consisted chiefly of garment workers, mostly Communist sympathizers. There were very few native Americans.

We set sail on October 15, 1929, on the steamer *Aquitania*, for Southampton, then to London, to Hull, by Finnish boat through the Kiel Canal to Helsingfors.

On November 1, we arrived at Belo Ostrov, on the Finnish-Russian border. Everything was ready for us on the Soviet side. The finest food and plenty of it was piled high on tables decked with the cleanest of white tablecloths, meats, fish, cake, fruit and wine in abundance. We were greeted as if we were distinguished diplomats representing a foreign

power. A squad of Red soldiers saluted us at the border. I can still remember the thrill of pride I experienced upon seeing them with their long khaki coats and their pointed caps with the magic red star of Communism. Every time I saw the hammer and sickle floating in the breeze, I felt a lump in my throat. This was our country, the fatherland of the international proletariat.

We were taken by train to Leningrad, where we were received by a huge demonstration at the railroad station. Speakers greeted us on behalf of the Russian workers. Hyman replied on behalf of the delegation. I could not help being deeply stirred. So was the entire delegation.

The delegation was piloted to the Hotel Europe, which we were told was exclusively for the workers. We had everything our hearts desired, free. We had wonderful meals, our suits were pressed and mended, our shoes shined, cigars and cigarettes, shaves and haircuts, laundry service and the use of a first-class automobile for transportation about Leningrad. One delegate needed a suitcase. This was promptly supplied him. After the evening meal we were taken to the theatre, where we enjoyed a performance of a revolutionary drama. Again speakers greeted us enthusiastically amidst tremendous applause. Fruit and a light lunch was served to us during the intermission. Then back to the hotel again by auto.

It was November 1st. A number of other delegations had arrived in the meantime, from England, France, Germany, South America, China, Japan, from all parts of the world. They had come for the November 7th celebration of the 12th anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

On November 2nd we were taken to the Czar's Winter Palace and shown the magnificent royal jewels and household furnishings, which were now all the property of the First Workers' Republic. More speeches. There were interpreters for each language-group and trade union propagandists who accompanied the delegation everywhere. We were under the constant supervision of John Ballam, American representa-

tive in the Profintern or Red Trade International. Finally two high trade union officials arrived from Moscow to take full charge of the entire delegation. They were Slutsky of the Miners' Union and Akulov, General Trade Union Secretary.

November 3rd was a busy day. We visited the Red Putilov factory, where tractors and railroad engines are produced. We attended what we were told was a meeting of the workers of the plant. Wages, we learned, averaged about 105 roubles per month (the rouble at the time was about 1.97 to the dollar). In addition, it was said, the worker received sick benefits, one month's vacation, unemployment insurance, a pension at the age of fifty, free theatre tickets and many other privileges. Mothers were cared for by the State at childbirth. We were particularly delighted with the nurseries, where apparently the children were being wonderfully cared for. "The worker is the real boss," our interpreters told us. "There is no foreman. The workers work freely and not because they are driven." We noticed a great many valuable machine parts rusting and in disuse. We noticed also a considerable wastage of valuable machinery, parts and material. When we called attention to these matters, we were told that the Russian workers were still backward, but that these shortcomings were being rapidly corrected.

In spite of these failings we were all of us deeply impressed, especially by the nurseries and the care of the children. Some children are taken home at night by their mothers, while others remain at the nursery, we were told. There was also an ambulatorium or free clinic for the workers. The workers were given lectures on sex hygiene. Birth-control posters were displayed prominently on the walls of the factory.

As to homes, our guides explained, every worker receives as much room as he needs, according to the size of his family, the minimum being not more than two persons to a room. We were shown so-called "workers' homes," where everything was as clean and neat as a pin. It was later that I discovered that these were actually the homes of the higher

officials of the plant and not those of the workers at all. But I swallowed everything blindly.

On the following day we visited places of historical interest, where the most important and stirring events had taken place during the Revolution. We saw the spot near the Neva River, where the Red seamen engaged the forces of Kerensky. We saw the Czarist dungeons and the cell in which Lenin had been imprisoned. Deeply impressed, we departed the same day for Moscow.

A great demonstration of workers greeted us as the delegation arrived at the October Station in Moscow on November 5th. Again speeches were made by Russian spokesmen and those of our delegation. When we arrived at our hotel, we found it filled with the members of other delegations. As we entered the dining-room, we found the tables filled with the finest foods in the most luxurious abundance, various kinds of meats and fish, soup, two kinds of bread, wine and beer, whisky if you asked for it, and we did. An orchestra played revolutionary airs as we enjoyed a repast such as we had never enjoyed before. The evening was topped off with a trip to a concert at the Bolshoi Theatre, where we received seats of honour on the stage prior to the performance. More speeches, a great ovation from an enthusiastic audience.

The next day our tireless guides and interpreters took us to the Amo factory, where trucks and auto buses are produced. The procedure was much the same as that in the Leningrad factories in demonstrating the enormous advantages which the Russian workers enjoyed under Stalin. In the evening we went to the Bolshoi Theatre again for a performance of the *Red Poppy*, which we witnessed from specially reserved seats in the front row. The speeches lasted until long after midnight.

At last came the long-awaited day, November 7th. From reserved seats near Lenin's mausoleum, we witnessed the greatest spectacle we had ever seen. Row upon row of the Red Army, tanks, huge guns, airplanes, dashing cavalry,

followed by immense throngs of workers from the Moscow factories. We thrilled as we saw Stalin, Voroshiloff and other leaders in person. In the evening there was so much going on that the delegation was divided up into groups to visit the numerous concerts, plays and other entertainments that marked that historic day.

Before we left Moscow, we visited the Old Bolsheviks' Club in the Kremlin, where we proudly rubbed shoulders with Molotov and other prominent revolutionists who had spent years in the Czarist prisons. The food, wines, cognac and champagne were of course excellent. Thereafter the delegation was divided. Some went to Dniepostroi and the Don. Others went to the Volga.

I went with the miners' delegation to the North Caucasus and the Don Basin anthracite region. A special train was allotted to us, which was well provided with choice food. In addition, occasional lunches were served us at some of the stations where enthusiastic delegations received us. We visited many mines in the Ukraine, the best one being the so-called American Mine, built by American engineers.

Wages, we were told, were 115 roubles per month with a six-hour day underground and seven hours over ground. To this was added social insurance of various kinds and other advantages said to be provided to all Russian workers. Enthusiastic greetings once again and a banquet of rich food and wines, to which most of us succumbed. That was their daily life, we thought, and how we envied them.

There were plausible explanations immediately ready for anything that did not seem quite right. Although women were being used for the hardest and roughest kind of labour, pushing coal cars, repairing the track and digging, it was explained that in the Soviet Union they get the same pay as the men for their labour. Costly machinery which was strewn about, dilapidated and rusty, was due to the fact that the Russian workers did not yet know how to handle them. The filthy shacks which we saw some distance from the

immaculate "workers' homes" on display, were the discarded homes of the miners under the Czar. Many mines were named after revolutionary leaders.

The American Mine was well ventilated. The guides explained that the miners received a suit of working clothes, a miner's cap and lamp, boots and other equipment at the mine. In America we had been forced to pay for this equipment out of our own pockets. We talked to the workers, or those who we thought were workers, and we came away well satisfied with conditions.

Kramatorsk was a steel plant and machine-producing centre, which we next visited. Here again we saw much scrapped machinery about, but nevertheless we were duly impressed by the roomy workers' hall, the shower baths and the wooden shoes supplied to the bathers, the lockers for clean and dirty clothing and the newly-built "workers' homes." At the open-air meeting arranged in our honour, I spoke on behalf of our delegation. We received a huge metal hammer and sickle as a souvenir and pledged ourselves to fight for the Soviet Union, should the need arise.

Soon we were on our way back to Moscow. With few exceptions we had all been deeply and most favourably impressed by what we had seen. I remember that at some railroad stations we noticed huge piles of potatoes rotting in the mud and rain. The peasants' carts rode roughshod through them. When we called attention to this apparent waste of valuable food, we were told that it was due to lack of transportation facilities.

As a climax to our trip came a series of meetings with noted functionaries in Moscow in the Hall of the Central Committee of the Trade Unions, the Centrosoyus. For five days we were propagandized by various leaders, Lozowsky, chairman of the Profintern or Red Trade Union International, Akulov, Krupskaya, Lenin's widow, Quibishev, members of the powerful Political Committee and others. At one of these meetings with Lozowsky, Hyman, a non-Communist member of the delegation, tried to explain that the Communist Party

was following an incorrect policy in the trade unions in the United States, but he was immediately challenged by Caroline Drew, who was the secretary of the Communist faction in the delegation. Of course, we all rallied to her support in a disciplined Communist manner and Hyman was left isolated in his views.

We were all urged to join the Communist Party, if we were not already members, and to further the revolutionary cause in our own country. In turn we made numerous recommendations for improvement of conditions which we thought might be changed for the better. These were received with respectful attention.

On November 22nd I returned to Leningrad with a number of delegates and on November 25th embarked on the Soviet steamer *Rykov*, with the voices of the farewell speakers still in my ears. I was loaded high with official reports and pamphlets and highly inspired by my first visit to the First Workers' Republic.

An incident which occurred on board the *Rykov* will indicate how completely carried away we were by what we had seen and heard. Our group travelled first-class on the upper deck. On the same boat, on the lowest deck, were three hundred families from a German colony established two hundred years ago in the middle of Volga region. They were departing with all their possessions to Germany and then to Canada. They looked pitifully thin and worn-out, their children sadly undernourished. During the entire trip to Kiel, we argued with them. They told us of the harrowing experiences they had had. We painted for them the glowing picture we had seen. They told us we were fools, that everything had been staged for our benefit, that it was all a humbug and lies, that the workers did not really live as we had been led to believe. We refused to believe them. We were told they were really counter-revolutionary *kulaks* (rich peasants). They insisted that they were only poor peasants, from whom all products were ruthlessly seized by the Soviet Government, while they were left to starve. They would rather, they said,

be content with a crust of bread in Canada than remain in the Soviet Union any longer.

But those in charge of our delegation warned us not to associate with these dangerous elements, that they might throw us into the ocean. We heeded the advice of our guardians and returned unshaken in our convictions about the glories of the Soviet Union.

## CHAPTER III

### I DECIDE TO MAKE MY HOME IN THE SOVIET UNION

ON my return, I remained in Newark. My services were very much in demand as a speaker and I spoke at numerous Slovak meetings about what I had seen in Russia. For a month the *Rovnost Ludu* carried my articles on the subject.

I was anxious to drop my work in the Slovak Workers' Society and desired to get a job in a factory. I had been searching for employment unsuccessfully for some time when I received a call from the House Committee of the Slovak Workers' Home in Newark, asking me to take charge of the building. The former manager had been fired for defrauding the organization. I had heard also that the Home had become nothing but a gambling and drinking den. I accepted the position of manager with the understanding that I would be allowed a free hand to change all this.

The Workers' clubs to which I had belonged in the past and which I had helped to organize, had had a good reputation among the workers. Their purpose had been to help labour in its efforts to organize, to raise strike relief funds, to conduct lectures and other cultural activities, to provide wholesome entertainment of a working-class character, and to serve as a people's centre in a given town or neighbourhood.

These conditions were entirely changed as far as the Newark organization was concerned. The heavy gambling and the frequent fights which occurred during card games drove away the more intelligent workers. I opened a vigorous fight on these practices. Once I had to protect myself with a baseball bat against the threats of vicious characters who

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now made the club their hangout. In complete disgust I relinquished my position.

Meanwhile I remained a member of the Grand Lodge of the Slovak Workers' Society and Chairman of the National Finance Committee. I began hearing reports of gangsters, racketeers and underworld elements infesting branches in other parts of the country. How disgusting all this seemed in comparison with the ideal life as I had seen it in the Soviet Union! When the reports finally reached this country of the completion and success of the first Five Year Plan, I decided to leave the United States and make my home in the one country where I was confident my wife and I would enjoy a happy life. My wife agreed with my decision.

We made preparations to go at once. I filled out my application at the office of the Amtorg and asked to be taken on as a mechanic. In addition I stated in my application that I volunteered to donate \$3,000, which made up a large part of my life's savings, for the purpose of buying machinery needed by the Soviet Union for its development of the Five Year Plan. Bogdanov, the head of the Amtorg, congratulated me on my offer. I asked to be sent to Novosibirsk, otherwise known as the "Soviet Chicago."

As a loyal Communist, I made application for a transfer to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. My request was flatly rejected by Israel Amter, then the District Organizer of the Communist Party in the New York District. He told me, "No Communist is allowed to transfer to the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. We need Communists here to make the revolution in the United States. They have enough there."

But suddenly the whole picture changed. I received a telephone call, a telegram and a letter, all in the same day, from Amter. The letter criticized me severely for offering the donation to the Amtorg and not notifying the Party. I do not know how they found out about my offer. I was instructed to report to Amter's office at once.

When I arrived this time at the office at 52 East Thirteenth

Street, in New York City, I did not have to wait a few hours as I usually had to do. I was ushered into the office without delay. Everyone was most polite and cordial to me. I did not understand the reason.

At last Amter explained matters. "The Five Year Plan is nearly completed," he said. "They do not need any more machinery. It is more important to give your money to the Party to carry on the revolutionary movement in the United States. The Party will take care of everything for you. The Party will send you over through the World Tourists, Inc. We will give you a recommendation to the Soviet Union as a good comrade. The Soviet organizations will take care of you. You are going to a workers' country. You will have nothing more to worry about. You will not need your money any more. You and your wife will be contented for the rest of your life."

The arguments were convincing. On January 29, 1932, I drew a cashier's cheque for \$2,500 from the New Jersey Trust Company of Newark, where my savings were deposited. This cheque I brought to the National Office of the Communist Party on Thirteenth Street and it was immediately cashed through the office of the World Tourists, Inc. But if I thought I had settled the problem I quickly found that I was mistaken.

During the following days I was set upon by a flock of representatives of the various subsidiary organizations of the Party. The news seemed to have been broadcast that I was throwing money about everywhere. Amter was not satisfied until I had given him \$250 more in cash. The New Jersey Section of the Communist Party got another \$250. Then there were donations of \$250 each to the Trade Union Unity League, the International Labour Defence and the *Daily Worker*. The Young Communist League and a children's camp received \$50 each. There was very little left of my lifelong savings when I got through.

On the following day, February 14, 1932, my wife and I were given a farewell banquet at the Slovak Workers' Home

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in Newark. Peter Sipka, treasurer of the Grand Lodge of the Slovak Workers' Society, was the toastmaster. Zatko, the secretary of the Grand Lodge, was there, as were also the leading Communist functionaries of Newark, and a huge crowd of workers.

The speakers all praised the good work my wife and I had done for the Party. They were confident that we would continue the fight for Socialism in the U.S.S.R.

Sipka thought this a good opportunity for a dig at me, for he and I had had numerous tiffs with each other. He now cautioned others against following our example and pointed out that we were running away from our revolutionary posts in the United States to a land in which we would have no burdens. "We need good Communists here," he warned.

With this exception the banquet was a wonderful send-off for us. The women had baked the cakes. Everything at the affair was donated. After many complimentary remarks, I spoke in reply and donated \$20 to the work of the Communist Party.

On February 16th we set sail on the *Berengaria* for the Soviet Union.

## CHAPTER IV

### OUR ARRIVAL AND DISAPPOINTMENT

ON board the *Berengaria* with us was a group of mechanics from various parts of the United States, bound, as we were, to make their home and livelihood in the Soviet Union. Among them were miners, auto mechanics, carpenters, tailors, engineers, a cabinetmaker and a young draftsman, named Knotek, from our Slovak Society. Besides us, there were two other couples. There were no children in the group.

Having heard that I had visited Russia previously, the members of the group plied me with questions about working and living conditions in the promised land. "Your conditions will be much better than in America," I told them. "You will not have to worry about unemployment. You will have a steady job at reasonable pay. When you are sick you will get full pay. Every year you will get one month's vacation. At fifty-five you will be pensioned on full pay." I painted the picture in glowing colours and they listened to me with enthusiasm.

We landed at Southampton, proceeded to London, from there to Hull, through the North Sea to Copenhagen, then by way of the Baltic Sea to Helsingfors and from there to the Soviet border. Some members of the group desired to purchase a few trinkets on the way, in London, Copenhagen and Helsingfors. The exchange was in our favour at the time, and they thought they could buy watches, fountain pens, knives and such knick-knacks cheap. But I urged them not to buy in a capitalistic country, but to wait until they got to the Soviet Union, where they could buy more cheaply.

We arrived on the Finnish side of the border in the morning. There was a restaurant at the railroad station which displayed excellent food, white bread, sandwiches, fruit and vegetables, clean and up-to-date, and priced very reasonably. I restrained the group from buying anything, however. "Don't buy here," I said. "On the other side of that little bridge where you see the red flag flying, you will get better food at a much cheaper price." We were all very hungry but we waited until we crossed the border.

There was no delegation to meet us at Belo Ostrov this time. No brass band and no speakers. All we saw were some poor emaciated-looking peasants, who passed us with looks that did not appear very friendly. We called to them and cheered in greeting, "Long live the Soviet Union. Long live the Red Army." But they passed on with weary steps without answering. A horde of ragged women and children were waiting at the railroad station. We heard some of them mutter, "More foreigners. They won't starve as we do."

We made haste to find the *stolovaya*, or restaurant, near the railroad station. A terrible stench greeted us as we entered. The tables were bare and topped by discoloured, dilapidated boards, spotted with remnants of decayed fish. The waitresses were dressed in coats which had once been white but now showed the marks of many soup stains. These garments looked as if they had not been washed in months. Some of us were afraid to order anything because of the general appearance of the place, but finally a few mustered up enough courage to ask the waitress for the menu. We were told that there was nothing but *ribnoy sup* (fish soup), which cost 49 kopeks.

When the soup reached the table, we looked at one another. Especially they looked at me. The smell which arose from the soup was indescribable. It seemed that they had cooked the entire fish, entrails and all, to make this appetizing dish. We could see the fish eyes and heads floating about in the plate. The soup itself was the colour of dishwater. There were no

vegetables. Since the waitress noticed that we were foreigners, we were allowed a piece of black, sour bread, which tasted like clay. Those who had ordered the soup tasted a mouthful and left the remainder. The others were in no mood to do any further ordering.

I felt terribly ashamed of myself. My wife turned to me and said, "Andrew, why don't you eat? You are in the workers' paradise. You must eat now." But I turned away heartbroken and disgusted. As we turned to leave we noticed a number of ragged men, women and children who rushed to the table and gulped down rapidly what we had left behind.

I have never seen such a toilet, if you can call it a toilet, as we found at the railroad station, and I have been through some rough mining camps in my life. There was simply a hole in the ground with no sewerage or even a seat. The edge of the hole was covered with excrement, while the odour permeated the entire vicinity of the small, bare and unheated shack in which the "toilet" was situated. It was March 1st and bitter cold. None of us availed ourselves of the "toilet" facilities.

About one hour before the train was due, we were called to the Customs' Office, a long wooden structure near the station. Although we did not have much time, the Customs' official insisted that I take everything out of my tightly packed trunk and place the contents right there in the mud. When he had inspected everything, I had a very difficult time to repack before the train arrived. I found, however, that the other members of the group had not been similarly bothered. The official had simply stamped their baggage without examination. When I asked them how they had managed to get away so easily, Knotek said, "Well, why didn't you give him a couple of dollars as we did?" "I thought we were in a workers' country and I was afraid to offer him a tip," I murmured shamefacedly in reply.

Our final task before departure was to register our money. I had \$175 with me and decided to exchange \$100 for Russian roubles. The rate was then 1.97. Thus I received 197 roubles

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and a slip explaining that I had received this sum in exchange for American money. "By showing this slip," the finance official explained, "you can buy in Torgsin." (In the Torgsin stores, purchases are made only with foreign money or gold.) Three weeks later when I went to the Torgsin store in Moscow with the slip, I was told that it was worthless because the order under which it had been issued had been "liquidated." I had to make my purchases on the open market, where I found that my roubles were worth about one cent, in terms of what I could buy for them. That meant that my \$100 was practically lost.

The train for Leningrad arrived about noon and we were assigned to a corner of a bare wooden car. We travelled third-class. We stopped at numerous way-stations, and at each stop ragged and haggard peasants, men and women, some with children, boarded the train. We spoke to them. When they heard that we were specialists seeking employment in the Soviet Union they said, "Well, you will probably have it better than we have, but you will soon find out how we live and the conditions in our unhappy country."

The peasants carried heavy bundles wrapped up in filthy rags. Some carried rusty, battered milk cans. We asked them where they were going and they explained. They were all workers on the *kolhozi*, or collective farms. In the bundles they carried potatoes and other vegetables which they had gathered and hidden from the Government officials and which they were taking to Leningrad to exchange for bread. "You see, they take everything away from us," they explained, "and we have no bread." The milk had been collected from a number of peasants to be exchanged for bread, which was to be divided among the members of the pool. "We will beg for help, for bread, on the streets of Leningrad," they said. "Maybe some of the people of the city will be good to us."

"Is it not true that your troubles are due to the fact that you are lazy, that you do not want to work?" we asked.

"Do you think it is easy for me to carry my baby on one arm and these heavy bundles with the other?" replied a gaunt

peasant woman. "We are hard-working people. All we want is enough to eat for our children and ourselves. It was different before. We had enough. We did not have to go to Leningrad to try to get a crust of bread."

As they related their troubles they cursed and railed bitterly against their despoilers. At every station the train was besieged by a throng of women and children crying, "*khlebushka, khlebushka! Dai kopeiku!*" (Bread, bread! Give a kopek!)

We arrived at Leningrad about 5.30. There was no delegation to greet us. All we saw was a mass of ragged beggars, mostly women and children. Around the station we marked the number of people lying, cold, dirty, and in a terrible state of neglect. We asked the Intourist representative who was waiting for us, why these people were lying about. She explained that they were good-for-nothing drunkards.

"Why does not the Government do something about them?" we asked.

"The Government cannot do anything for such people," she replied.

The next day we inquired further on this matter. "These people are not really drunkards," we were told. "They have nothing to eat. So they drink as much as they can get hold of, to forget their troubles and they can't stand much liquor on an empty stomach."

We stopped at an Intourist third-class hotel near the station. It was like any 25 cent flop-house in the United States. We had paid the Intourist \$5 per day in advance, for these accommodations. The bare steel beds were badly infested with vermin. When I was in the Hotel Europe with the delegation, the sheets were changed daily. We received no fresh sheets now. We longed for a bath after our trip, but since the two tubs with which the hotel was equipped were in constant use, we could not get near them. We washed in a common washroom with cold water, without soap. No towels were supplied us.

Our breakfast usually consisted of tea, stale fish or cheese

and black bread. For lunch we had tasteless *borsch* (beet soup), or *stchee* (cabbage soup) and "cutlet." This "cutlet" was made of a small amount of decayed meat and a greater proportion of sour, black bread. Dessert was some stewed dried fruit—apples, cherries, or pears. Several times I had to return the dishes which had evidently not been washed, and demand clean ones in their stead. Since I felt a good deal responsible for the welfare of the group, I complained bitterly to the Intourist representative about the way we were being treated. "You are not in America now," was the reply. "This is our system. We can't help it."

Just before we left for Moscow, the Intourist autobus took us on an excursion to see the sights of Leningrad. It was 30 degrees below zero and we nearly froze in the autobus. We did not have much desire for sight-seeing and turned back as quickly as possible.

When we returned we were called to the Intourist office to arrange for shipment of our baggage. No roubles would be accepted in payment, only American dollars. Some members of the group had to pay as high as \$20. My trunks were marked for Novosibirsk, so I had to pay \$45 in freight charges.

We boarded the train for Moscow at 10 p.m. None of us slept on the hard, crowded benches. All night we watched our baggage, for we had been warned against sneak-thieves. Nor did we feel very comfortable in such close contact with the tightly packed crowd of unwashed and ill-smelling passengers. We arrived at the October station in Moscow at 10 a.m. the next morning.

## CHAPTER V

### LOOKING FOR WORK

AT the Novo Varskaya Hotel in Moscow we encountered many other workers who had migrated from the United States and Canada. We rushed to them for information and advice.

Borik, a Slovak engraver, had arrived two days before via Hamburg. On the way his gold watch and chain were stolen, when he fell asleep on the train. He had invested a good part of his life-savings in the trip to the U. S. S. R. He intended to investigate conditions first and then send for his wife who remained in New York. He wandered about the streets of Moscow talking to workers everywhere. By the time I got to Moscow he had already heard enough to open his eyes to the real situation. Seven days after his arrival in Russia, he started on his return trip for the United States.

Borisy, an auto mechanic and a member of our group, had left his wife in Chicago. He had only 65 cents left when we arrived in Leningrad. In Moscow he immediately visited some of his relatives. As soon as he heard their story, he sold his tools for \$6. With this and a few roubles he collected from his relatives he managed to reach Helsingfors in Finland. He went to the office of the American Consul there and cabled for money with which he returned to the United States.

I had with me a fountain pen, which had b<sup>t</sup> the <sup>en</sup> <sup>up</sup> <sup>se</sup> America as a gift to Biskup, a Czechoslovakian evening to my time in Moscow. I found him in a squalid Sokolniki District tannery on the Moscow River. He had beeight men whom I did tannery in Central Asia, as a shock-

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(excellent worker) to study engineering and tanning methods in Moscow. He advised me not to leave Moscow, because there was no bread outside. He also told me to try to get a place as a foreign specialist, which would entitle me to special privileges in wages, food, accommodations and general treatment. Otherwise, he declared, I would not be able to stand the conditions.

About two days after we arrived in Moscow, we were visited by Helen Durchak, a former member of the Communist Party of Newark, New Jersey. Her advice was the same as Biskup's. She suggested that I try to get work at the Elektrozavod factory.

The Intourist tried to arrange a series of excursions for us again, but we were interested only in scurrying around for information regarding employment and conditions, and we refused the proffered entertainment. At this time our search was suddenly interrupted by an official announcement that all those who had come through the Intourist as tourists would have to return to the United States immediately. Only those who had a definite contract for employment could remain. This ruling had been adopted on February 15th, because of the serious economic conditions in the Soviet Union. We were thrown into a panic. We had been promised in New York, that we would have plenty of opportunity to look for work. In fact, we were told that there was a shortage of labour. None of us had any return tickets or money with which to buy any. Indignation ran high among the group.

I decided to take matters in hand. I went to the American Section of the Comintern, (Communist International) and lodged a complaint against the way in which our people had been treated. From there I was sent to see Overgaard, then

~~representative in the Profintern (Red Trade Union~~

I explained to him that it would be a serious ~~Trade Union~~ if these workers were forced to go to the United States, disappointed and heartbroken, ~~and~~ promises which had been made to us in

New York. I question with the Labour C Okolov in th Unions. The criticized it everywhere meeting of The me Strong, stay, the work as permit some the o that they V 3 2 1

New York. I would not let the matter rest. I took up the question with Borodin, in charge of the Foreign Bureau of the Labour Commissariat. With Overgaard I went to see Okolov in the Central Committee of the All-Russian Trade Unions. The *Moscow News* took up our case and severely criticized the Intourist. We were promised quick action everywhere. The matter was finally settled at a special meeting of the entire group in our hotel.

The meeting was addressed by Borodin and Anna Louise Strong. They explained that we had obtained permission to stay, that our hotel bills would be paid while we looked for work and that in the future no one-way tourists would be permitted to come to the Soviet Union. We were told that some of us would have to leave Moscow for other parts of the country where we were needed. We felt a bit easier after that and the group was particularly thankful to me for my efforts in their behalf.

We were instructed to register at the Labour Commissariat, so that the various Trusts might be notified that we were available. This instruction was carried out and the group secured places in various cities throughout the Soviet Union. Through the Profintern I got a job in the Elektrozavod electrical equipment factory. Overgaard urged me not to go to Novosibirsk as I had planned. He was not very clear about the reasons, but owing to his insistence I decided to stay in Moscow. This was a very fortunate decision for me, as I later found out. I sent a telegram to Nikolaev on the Black Sea, through which my two cases of household goods were to pass to Novosibirsk, in Siberia, and received them in Moscow three months later. I was entitled to a considerable refund, since I had paid \$45 in American dollars for the longer trip, but I received only forty paper roubles, which were worth about \$1 in American money.

About four months after the members of the group left Moscow, I returned home from work one evening to my room on the Matroskaya Tichina, in the Sokolniki District, to find the room filled with seven or eight men whom I did

not recognize. I looked from one to another in astonishment, until one called out:

"Don't you know us, Comrade Smith? Don't you remember how we came together to the Soviet Union? Don't you remember all you did for us?"

Then I recognized the group that had been sent to a sulphur mine at Kokand, in Central Asia. There was Lazarenko, a Ukrainian by birth, a machinist who had left his wife and children in Chicago; Otvosh, a young Hungarian carpenter, former member of the Young Communist League in the United States; Tom, an Irish machinist from Chicago and Communist Party member, and four or five others. They were now so haggard and worn that I failed to know them. We sat up almost the entire night while they related their experiences.

These men had owned their own automobiles in the United States, which they sold when they left. This experience qualified them for work as chauffeurs at the sulphur mine. After one month at the mine they were all laid up with malaria and typhus. This was due to the food and living conditions. The diet of soup, *kasha*, green plums and green apricots left them terribly undernourished. The water supply was unsanitary and insufficient. Sometimes they did not see bread for two weeks and then it was 40 roubles a kilo (a month's pay was about 150 roubles). They sold all their extra clothing, suitcases, fountain pens, watches and other articles, in order to buy bread. They came to Moscow with only the clothes on their backs. They told me that they had often worked forty-eight hours in one shift. This sulphur mine had been worked by prison labour under the Czar. They showed me samples of the tobacco they smoked. It was nothing but chopped roots and grass.

They had lain for more than one month in the hospital connected with the mine, a miserable shack in which they could not obtain even the barest necessities of medical attention. It was only due to the close co-operation and comradeship maintained by the group in taking care of each other

that they had managed to pull through. Blaha and Knotek, two young Communists who had travelled with us, had remained at Kokand. Blaha was in the hospital with malaria and typhus and Knotek was taking care of him.

When the group arrived in Moscow, they invaded the Labour Commissariat and the Trade Union offices and they minced no words in telling them what they thought. Tom, the Irishman, was the leading spokesman:

"You call this Communism," he said, "when a few lickspittles take it easy and have all the privileges and the rest of the people starve? When we get back to the United States, we will tell the truth about your rotten system here!"

They demanded that return tickets be sold them for the roubles they had obtained in selling their belongings. The officials tried to calm them with promises of better jobs, but they refused to be silenced until they had obtained their passage for America. I asked them if they were hungry and there was a roar of assent in reply. We had some bacon and eggs, which they ate with great enjoyment, insisting that I accept payment for it. A few days later they left Moscow for the United States.

About two weeks after the departure of the group, I received a letter from Blaha, stating that he and Knotek were coming to Moscow and asking me to find jobs for them. However, it was impossible for me to find anything. One week later I found young Blaha at my home when I returned from work. His face was thin and yellow. He wore a hand-made Uzbek cap of various colours and beneath I could see that he had lost almost all his hair. His voice was weak and nervous. His clothes were many sizes too big for him. There was only a skeleton left of the muscular youngster who had left the United States burning with enthusiasm.

"Where is Knotek?" I asked.

"Knotek is at the Sokolniki Hospital, not far from here. He is very sick with typhus," Blaha replied.

Then the lad told the story of their trip to Moscow:

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"When I recovered in the hospital, Knotek became sick. We decided that we would not stay in Kokand any longer. We ran away from the hospital and boarded a train for Moscow. Knotek was delirious and in high fever. Several times he tried to jump off the train, and we had to hold him down by sheer force. The railroad officials telegraphed ahead and a stretcher was awaiting for Knotek when we arrived in Moscow. He was immediately taken to the hospital."

The next day my wife and I went to the hospital to visit Knotek. He was lying on a bed of boards without springs, in a cold, dark, narrow corridor. His lips and tongue were black and he was burning with fever. He lay uncared for in the midst of his own excrement. When I saw the terrible condition the boy was in, I immediately demanded to see the chief doctor, to whom I complained bitterly. He explained that the boy was going to die anyway, so there was no use in bothering with him.

"It makes no difference if he is going to die or not," I replied. "He deserves proper care as long as he can get it. If I find this boy in such condition again I will complain to the highest authorities."

Thereafter when we visited Knotek, we were compelled to wait a couple of hours in order to give the attendants a chance to make things presentable. We also arranged to bring him some milk, eggs, white bread, butter and fruit, which he would not have obtained otherwise. We had no way of knowing, however, whether this food ever reached the patient or not.

After two weeks in the hospital, Knotek died. I cabled to his parents in Berwyn, a suburb of Chicago, the news of the death of their only son. Then I went to the Labour Commissariat and to the Sulphur Trust, to arrange the details of the funeral. I told them that Knotek was a member of the Young Communist League of the United States and I demanded that the various Soviet organizations send representatives to do him honour. As a result of my insistence, an official funeral was arranged.

There were about forty present at the funeral which was held at the Moscow Crematorium, including representatives of the Labour Commissariat, the Sulphur Trust, the Komsomol (Communist Youth), some Red soldiers, Blaha, my wife and myself. For one reason or another we had been notified at the last moment and I had no time to get together any of the American colonists who were very anxious to be present.

When we entered the Crematorium, the representatives were already there. Knotek's body, dressed in Komsomol uniform, lay in a red wooden casket surrounded by flowers. To this gathering I addressed the following words:

"Comrades and Fellow-Citizens: Before us lies the body of a young man, a young American Communist. He came to this country with hope and enthusiasm for the building up of Socialism and a better world. He was the only son of Communist parents who raised and educated him to be a draughtsman. In doing this they had no thought of his serving in a capitalist country. Their sole hope and ambition was that as soon as he graduated he would come to the Soviet Union and help to build up the workers' country. For this, they sacrificed everything.

"A few days ago I cabled to Knotek's mother. This Communist mother who gave her only son to the Soviet Union, how will she feel when she hears the news? What shall I tell her? How shall I explain what has happened here? Why did this young comrade meet his death? It is the fault of the bureaucrats. Instead of using the young man's talent as a draughtsman in a Soviet factory, where there is a shortage of skilled help, he was sent as a chauffeur to a dangerous sulphur mine in Central Asia, where in Czarist days prisoners were sent as a punishment.

"This policy is not right. This boy was not used to conditions out there. Sending him out to this sulphur mine meant sending him to his death.

"By doing these things, the bureaucrats discredit the Soviet Union as a workers' country. We American workers will not forget or forgive this treatment. As long as we are

in the Soviet Union we will fight against this bureaucracy. I appeal to the Trust representatives, to the Labour Commissariat and to the representatives of the various Soviet organizations against this policy."

At this point I broke into tears and could not continue. My wife and Blaha wept with me while the officials kept their eyes coldly fixed on the ground. After we had lowered the casket into the crematory chamber, three Red soldiers came to my side and congratulated me, saying:

"You have told the truth about what is happening here, Comrade."

And they squeezed my hand warmly.

## CHAPTER VI

### I BECAME A WORKER IN THE ELEKTROZAVOD FACTORY

ARMED with the necessary credentials from the Profintern, I took trolley Number 33 to the Elektrozavod factory or Elektrozavodskaya. I reported to Swassman, in charge of the Foreign Bureau of the factory. After some questioning, he sent me to Spirin, chief mechanic of the ATE, or Electrical Equipment Department on the third floor. I was placed on six days' probation. As a result of various tests I was placed in the seventh, or highest category, as a machinist.

Under this category I was to receive the highest wage scale, and I was permitted to buy my food at the Insnab (store for foreign workers and specialists). Most of the other workers in the plant were in the third category. It took me three weeks to get my book for the Insnab. In the meantime I had to depend on the generosity of my friends and on what money I had, in order to buy food.

My job was to repair machinery. For the first two weeks I was chiefly employed on lathes. Since I was a pretty good mechanic I was then promoted to the position of brigadier (foreman) in a construction group, building new machines and parts from blueprints. We had a seven-hour day and one day off in every six. But since we were all working on a piece basis, we worked from eight to ten hours a day, on the average.

It will be asked how it is possible to pay piece rates on building and repairing machines and parts. Let me explain how it worked. One day we had to repair a German-made lathe. First, the brigade or gang took the machine apart and placed the various parts in boxes or barrels. Then I notified the

office secretary, and an official known as the "specifier" was sent to the department. In this case the specifier was a young girl of twenty-two, with some slight training in the Soviet technical schools. She knew very little about machinery, as we quickly found out.

First, she listed the number and name of all the parts, and the repair that had to be made in each case. This took three full days and a great many sheets of paper. Then the specifier took her data to the "calculator" in the office. After taking all the parts out again and after examining them for two more days, this functionary set a price on the entire job, having in mind his budget and the wage scale of the workers.

In the beginning I found that I had worked on a job a full week making 40 roubles, while some of the workers in the gang made as little as 10 roubles. When I complained to Ilyin, the chief master of the department, we found on investigation that the calculator had figured five minutes on a boring that should have taken an hour and a half, and fifteen minutes on a boring that should have taken three minutes. As a result of my complaint the calculator's estimate of 150 roubles for the entire job was thrown into the waste-basket and we were paid on a per diem basis, according to the factory scale.

In almost every case we had to go through useless calculation and labour by specifiers and calculators in their effort to establish a piece basis, only to have the figures discarded later, when the workers protested and demanded pay according to the scale. When it came to putting the machines together again, there were always parts missing. These parts usually turned up later in the speculators' market, having been stolen and sold by workers in the factory, in order to buy bread. The Government could not check this practice and was compelled to close its eyes to it and buy back its own machine parts from the speculators.

During my first year in the factory, ten young workers ranging in age from nineteen to twenty-two were brought up

by the Gay Payoo (Political Police) on charges of stealing machine parts. I was selected as one of twelve judges at the trial. During the trial a young Komsomol, an electrician working in the factory, pleaded for the young men in an eloquent speech in which he tried to explain that the economic conditions in the Soviet Union were such that the young workers were compelled to steal in order to live. Despite this courageous plea, the ten were sentenced to ten years in the penitentiary. About a month after the trial the young electrician disappeared from the factory, no one knows where.

I made many acquaintances in the factory. Among them was Kuznetzov, a bench machinist of about thirty-five, a native Russian. His wife was working in another factory. He invited me to come to see him and his wife at his home in the Cherkisovo Barracks, in which many Elektrozavod workers lived, and which lay some distance outside of Moscow. I accepted his invitation one day after working hours.

Kuznetzov lived with about 550 others, men and women, in a wooden structure about 800 feet long and 15 feet wide. The room contained approximately 500 narrow beds, covered with mattresses filled with straw or dried leaves. There were no pillows, or blankets. Coats and other garments were being utilized for covering. Some of the residents had no beds and slept on the floor or in wooden boxes. In some cases beds were used by one shift during the day and by others at night. There were no screens or walls to give any privacy to the occupants of the barracks. There were no closets or wardrobes, because each one owned only the clothing on his back.

In the centre aisle, which was about three feet wide, there was a row of kerosene stoves, on which men and women were heating *kipiatok*, (boiled water) which they drank without sugar or milk, eating along with it a piece of sour black bread. There were no other heating facilities. The men and women sat upon their beds as they ate this, which was their supper, their knees touching the adjoining bed as they did so. There were no tables.

officials living in the same house. He wanted to talk to me about the United States.

I was led into a gorgeous seven-room apartment equipped with its own kitchen and individual bathroom, with elevator service, telephones, steam heat, hot and cold water. My host lived there with his wife and two maid servants. The couple had no children. The apartment consisted of a salon, or sitting-room, a dining-room, two master bedrooms and one bedroom for the two servants, an office or workroom for the master of the house, a room for card playing and dancing and a summer porch. The apartment was sumptuously furnished with thickly upholstered chairs, soft couches and expensive antiques. Scattered throughout the suite were small, hand-carved tables covered with beautifully coloured mosaics made of rare Ural stone. The parquet floors and the walls were covered with thick, hand-woven Oriental rugs. In odd corners one could see rich knick-knacks consisting of jewel boxes made of seashells, vases, hand-carved ash trays and Oriental bric-à-brac. From the ceiling in each room hung a heavy crystal chandelier. These were supplemented by more modern floor lamps, with cut glass and silk shades. The couple possessed a radio of Russian manufacture and a German phonograph. On the floors of the master bedrooms were thick white bear-skins. Rich Russian hand-made draperies hung about the walls to complete the picture. It was the most luxurious apartment I had ever seen, richer even than the apartment of the wealthy business man in Pittsburgh for whom my wife had worked as a cook.

I found the lady of the house reclining in a soft easy chair in the sitting-room, reading a magazine. She held a gold tipped cigarette in her soft white fingers. I could see her highly rouged finger nails. She had not spared either lipstick or rouge in making herself ready for the occasion and her eyebrows were carefully plucked in the most up-to-date manner. Her bleached hair was permanently waved à la mode.

Clad in a heavy, dark silk dress, cut very low, she wore silk

stockings and high-heeled shoes to match. Occasionally she glanced at her imported gold wrist watch and toyed with her pearl necklace. Heavy gold earrings hung almost to her shoulders. Her fingers were heavily ringed. Altogether, by her appearance and manners, she looked to me like a prostitute.

We were served in the brilliantly lighted dining-room with delicacies which I had not seen in the Soviet Union. There was real tea, served in delicate Oriental cups, and poured from an enormous steaming silver samovar. The knives, forks and spoons were apparently relics of the treasures of the defunct Russian aristocracy. There was a special silver service for each course. We had white bread, butter, caviare, cheese, fresh radishes, salami, fish, fresh fruit, apples, pears, raspberry compote, delicious Russian candies and pastry, and cognac of the most ancient vintage.

In the course of the repast, my hostess consumed a most generous portion of the cognac. She began to laugh hysterically and talk in loud tones. As we left the house after our visit, I remarked sarcastically to my friend:

"And this is what the Russian workers have to slave for. And they call this a workers' country."

"This is nothing," my friend replied, "you ought to see what goes on when they throw one of their Gay Payoo parties."

You must defend the Soviet Union, which is the only workers' country!'

" 'Defend the Soviet Union!' he exclaimed bitterly. 'What shall I defend? This?' and he pointed sarcastically at his tattered trousers. 'Why should I defend such a country, where we have nothing but misery and starvation?'

"At this point we arrived at our new home. Vladimir tried to smooth things over and minimize Peter's excited words. They carried my trunks, suitcases, bedding and furniture to my apartment.

"How many of you live here?" Peter asked as he entered the apartment. 'Just my husband and I,' I answered.

"Two people for such a big room!" exclaimed Peter in amazement. 'You foreigners have it good. My father died in the Revolution and what do we have? We live sixty in one room like this. They tell us that under the Czar the Russian people lived in the same room with cattle. But the pigs, the cows and the chickens were healthy, at least. Now we have to live with all kinds of diseased people. Some have syphilis, some have tuberculosis. All are covered with lice and dirt and we have to live packed in one room, use the same toilet and all breathe the same foul air. The pigs lived much better than we do now!'

"The remarks of the youngster were like a knife in my heart. I felt like packing my bags and leaving in mortification and shame. Both us of wept.

"Again Vladimir tried to smooth the troubled waters. 'Don't worry, Peter,' he said. 'There will be rooms enough and food enough for everybody, when we have Socialism.'

" 'Molchi' (Be quiet), cried Peter. 'Don't talk so much. I've heard that story so many times that I'm sick of it.'

"I divided all the roubles I had between them and they left."

## CHAPTER VIII

### I WRITE A LETTER TO ZATKO

DURING my first month in Moscow I lived at the Varvaskaya Hotel until I could get a room elsewhere. There were many American workers there who had returned from various parts of the Soviet Union and I talked with them about the conditions they had seen.

One day I had a talk with Newman in the hotel dining-room. He was an Austrian Jew from New York and a cabinet-maker by trade. Tired of the fruitless search for work in New York he had come with his son, a lad of twenty, who was a machinist. As a result of his reading Intourist and Communist literature, he had left his wife in the United States, to seek a livelihood in the Soviet Union. He had been a strong Communist sympathizer. He had stopped off first in Austria, but finding nothing there he came to the U.S.S.R.

Newman and his son were sent by the Narkomtrud (Labour Commissariat) to a lumber mill and wood factory in the Urals. In order to secure this job, they were required to surrender their American citizenship and thus they were left entirely at the mercy of the Soviet Government.

Newman was back in Moscow after two months' experience in the Urals. His sole aim at the moment was to raise sufficient money through the Narkomtrud and through the sale of his tools and those of his son, to get back to the United States as quickly as possible. He told a harrowing story of life in the lumber barracks, of working from twelve to fourteen hours a day, of a body-wrecking diet of black *kasha* (buckwheat) and bread which tasted as if it were made of

"What are you doing here?" I asked, in astonishment.  
"Are you working?"

Then he told me his story. "As soon as I got to Moscow I got a job on the railroad running from Moscow to Kharkov. I worked on the tracks. I stayed there for a few months but I could not stand it any longer. The workers there were starving. I had no strength to work. The first chance I could get I jumped a freight train and here I am back in Moscow."

"Didn't you see what conditions were here when you arrived?" I asked. "Why didn't you return with John Kuchta, who went back immediately?"

"Yes, he was smart and I am a *durak* (fool). When I saw the people hungry everywhere, the interpreters told me that they were *kulaks* (rich peasants) and that they did not want to work. I believed what they told me. I am a *durak*."

"How is it that you did not tell anyone that you were going to the Soviet Union before you left?" I asked him. He looked at me with that faithful dog-like look of his and said, "I wanted to surprise you, Mr. Smith."

"Why are you dressed so poorly?" I queried. "What happened to all the clothes you brought with you in your trunks?"

"It is true that I brought a lot of clothes. But those clothes saved my life. I have sold them all in order to get food. I have a few roubles left. I am saving them. Maybe with God's help I will get out of here. I want to go to Czechoslovakia, or to the United States. I left some money with Vlha. I have written to him but I have not heard from him yet."

Then I explained to him as carefully as I could the technical procedure of getting out, utilizing the experience I had had in helping other foreign workers.

"You remember, Mr. Smith, how you used to lecture to me about Communism, how good things are in the Soviet Union, how free the workers are here and so on? Every-

thing here is *na oborot* (just the opposite) of what you told me."

His reproaches were not easy to bear. I told him:

"I could not help it, John. I was fooled just as you were. These leaders, these racketeers, they fooled me when I was here in 1929. That Stalin and his system! He is responsible for the fact that many American workers have come here just as we have done. It is lucky that you are still alive."

"The devil take the Communists straight to hell," burst out John. "These people are living well, while millions are starving." I have never seen John since.

The three accounts I have given here were typical of the stories which I heard in the corridors and lobbies of the hotel where I was staying. I resolved that something must be done in order to prevent other workers from coming here from America, only to go through the same suffering and disillusionment. I therefore wrote the following letter to John Zatko of Newark, New Jersey, who had succeeded me as the General Secretary of the Slovak Workers' Society:

DEAR COMRADE ZATKO:

I am sorry to say that I am not finding conditions in the Soviet Union to be as they were pictured to me when I was a delegate in 1929. I see nothing else here but bureaucratism and forced labour. People are starving right in the streets. The government does not care at all and leaves them out in the cold to die.

It is impossible for an American to eat the food we get here in the restaurant. It is so filthy and rotten.

Don't believe the stories you hear that there are no classes in Russia. The workers are divided into categories. Those who work the hardest get the least, while those who have soft hands and the easy jobs get the best of everything. I believe that Socialism will come in the United States much sooner than in the Soviet Union. Communism or Socialism here is bankrupt. I appeal to you to do everything possible, so that comrades and workers should not come here, because nobody can stand the situation in this country. Don't be fooled any longer by all the propaganda because you cannot find such a thing as honesty

## I WAS A SOVIET WORKER

to myself, "Now the fat is in the fire." I rushed home, took my copy of the Zatko letter and proceeded to the Comintern. I found Peters, looking well-fed and well-dressed, in a comfortable office on the third floor of the Comintern building. He was a Hungarian, formerly manager of the American Communist Daily, *Uj Előre*. He asked me whether I had written a letter to Newark. "Certainly," I said. "I suppose you have the letter here." "No," he replied, "but the letter is in good hands."

"Well then," I told him, "I will read it to you."

At this, I took my copy out of my pocket and translated its contents to him in Hungarian. As I touched upon the various points, I amplified them with examples from my own experience. When I finished I asked him, "Do you find anything wrong with this letter? Isn't everything I say the truth?"

He evaded any direct reply but in very serious tones, he said:

"Even if such things are true, as a Communist you have no right to write about them to the United States. You should have been more careful. You might get into serious trouble for this. I shall have to report your case to the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union."

He pointed out that there was only one way in which I could get out of my difficulties and that was by writing an article in the proper vein in the *Rovnost Ludu*. Faced by his veiled threat, I wrote a somewhat conciliatory article with a few critical comments. This was published in a garbled form with an added criticism by the editor.

As I left Peters I told him that I was not worried about the consequences of my actions, since I was an American citizen and they could do nothing to me.

I expected a call to the Central Executive Committee at any moment. But nothing of the kind happened. About three weeks later I was called to the office of the Director of the ATE division. I thought my hour had come.

There I found Petchenkov, the vice-director, Ossipov, the technical director, Achmadulin, secretary of the factory unit of the Communist Party, and Pomortzev, the trade union secretary. Petchenkov was the spokesman.

"Smith," he said, "we have called you here in order to promote you to the position of technical inspector of machinery. We feel that in view of your long and creditable record in the Communist Party and your practical experience, you should be relieved of all physical work and receive an executive position."

I was somewhat taken aback. I had expected an entirely different statement as a result of Peters' threat. I hesitated about accepting the offer, for I feared that this might be an attempt to frame me up in some compromising position. But they insisted that it was my duty as a party member to accept, and finally I did.

"What salary would you expect?" asked Petchenkov.

I was receiving about 400 roubles a month at the time. I told him that I would be well satisfied with 450 roubles. In spite of their protests that my figure was much too low for the position, it was finally decided that I was to receive 450 roubles, and that upward adjustments would be made whenever I needed additional money. In this way the administration sought to silence my complaints and buy my support.

In my new post I had more opportunities to acquaint myself with the methods in the factory than before. My job was to investigate the functioning of the machinery in the various departments.

One day I discovered a Cleveland Automatic Four Spindle Lathe standing unused and badly rusted in the Mechanical Department. The machine was worth fully \$25,000 new. I asked the workers to direct me to the chief's office. This chief said that he had so many matters on his hands that he did not know anything about this particular machine. He referred to a subordinate, who in turn told me to see the chief master. The chief master did not know anything

usually those who were technically incompetent who sought this method of gaining favour. *Udarniks* were entitled to speedy promotion, and were not docked when they were sick. A *udarnik* secured special consideration when looking for lodgings. He was entitled to first call for vacations to the Sanatoria, for clothing, shoes, candy, fruit or other luxuries in the *magazin* (general store) as well as low-priced theatre tickets. I found this method of favouritism on the one hand, and slave-driving on the other far more exacting and pernicious than anything I had ever experienced in the United States.

Elsewhere in the same department I found a drill press hand operating a Tielle drill of German manufacture. His head and his left hand were covered with a filthy bandage. He was making a 15 millimetre boring in a piece of steel, a size of boring which requires an extremely slow speed of operation. This worker was running his machine at high speed. The spindle and drill were smoking furiously. In addition I saw with astonishment that he was operating the drill without clamping or bolting the piece on the machine table. I rushed up and said:

"What is the matter with you? Do you want to be killed? Why don't you clamp your work down?"

"I can't help it," the worker replied. "We have no time for such things. I had an accident only a few days ago. Look at my head and my hand. I was struck by a piece of steel. But I must keep on, otherwise I will not reach my quota."

"Why don't you get a *bulletin* (permission to stay home for illness) from the doctor?" I asked.

"I have already been to the doctor," he said, "but I could not get a *bulletin*, the doctor said, because I have no fever."

I had noticed the enormous number of workers with bandages, in all parts of the factory. I should say that almost one in every three showed signs of some injury. Now I understood the reason.

What I had seen in my new position made me more dissatisfied than ever. I was resolved not to let the matter rest.

My opportunity came some days later at a meeting of the Communist unit (*yatcheka*) of my department. The meeting was opened with a communication from the District Committee of the party calling for a campaign to cut down spoilage and to reduce production costs. The party secretary followed with an explanation of what we were expected to do in order to carry out this programme. A few speakers from the floor supported him with unbroken unanimity.

At this moment I took the floor and said:

"Comrades, I wish to give my opinion as to the reason for the great spoilage in our factory and how we can eliminate it. The workers are not only spoiling the products but they are spoiling the machinery as well. The workers are allotted so little time for the making of parts, that it is impossible for them to keep up the required speed without spoiling products and machinery. This was the general complaint I found in talking to the workers in the department. They complain of the quotas demanded of them by the calculator and they complain that they do not have enough to eat. Unless you give the workers more wages and more food, you will not cut down the spoilage."

"The officers and leaders of the factory are not interested in the general spoilage. They are simply interested in filling out the programme of production, and getting their premium, which is divided only among the directors and higher officials. They do not understand or do not care to understand that while they may be filling out their own programme now, there will be great difficulties later, because of the breakdown of our machines due to improper handling and neglect."

"In my opinion, we must change all this and line up our work in such a way that we secure a maximum of production, but at the same time maintain our equipment at the highest efficiency. As long as the workers have to worry all the time about their stomachs, about not having enough to eat for themselves and their families, they cannot give the proper attention to the quality of their work and to the question of cutting down the spoilage of products and machines."

The workers are forced to work at top-notch speed, they cannot pay attention to safety, and you have a high rate of accidents in the factory."

When I was finished, the secretary arose to reply. He touched on some of the points made by other speakers, but he dealt mainly with the issues I had raised. "Comrade Smith," he said, "is a good Communist and an active comrade. But he does not understand conditions here. He is still new in the Soviet Union. When he has been longer in our country, he will understand that the party policy is correct." Then the secretary's report was approved by the meeting and a committee was appointed to carry out the recommendations.

Outside, on my way home, a number of party members slapped me on the shoulder and congratulated me for my remarks.

"Why don't you get up and speak too?" I asked.

"We can't do it. We are Russians. We are not foreigners like you," they replied.

## CHAPTER X

### THE CASE OF VASILIY VASILIEOVITCH

VASILIY VASILIEOVITCH was a lathe-hand in my department in the Elektrozavod factory. Vasiliy lives at the Ismaelovsky general house where about five hundred workers reside. He has a room with a friend who works on another shift.

At 5.30 the factory whistles shriek forth their first awakening blast. Vasiliy is on the first shift. He jumps out of bed at the first whistle, slips on his only pair of trousers, oily and begrimed, and rushes barefoot to the toilet in the yard. There are three toilets for the entire building. He finds a line of about twenty-five or thirty ahead of him. He gives the usual password to the last one on the line, "*Vi poslie dnyi, ya zavami.*" (You are last, I am next.) His place reserved, he rushes back to his room to attend to other matters.

He winds some filthy rags about his feet and is about to put on his boots when he notices that the glued rubber soles have come loose due to the muddy weather. Swearing loudly, he looks about him for a piece of wire or string. There is none to be found. He throws down the boots angrily, crying, "*Chto dielat?*" (What shall I do now?)

Vasiliy rushes back to the toilet barefoot, only to find that his chance has been passed, that his place is no longer recognized. Again he takes his place on line with the inevitable, "*Vi poslie dnyi, ya zavami,*" and then rushes back to his room to solve the boot problem. Finally he is struck by a happy idea. He pulls out the cord holding up his underdrawers and uses it to bind his boots together. Lacking the proper support for his undergarment, he is forced to

discard it for the day in order to be able to use his more necessary boots. He rushes out to the toilet, but again his turn has been passed, so he is forced to stand in line and wait until his turn comes.

Vasiliy has a basin of water standing in his room, which he prepared the night before. He takes some of the water in his mouth, squirts it on his hands, wipes his eyes quickly with them, dries himself with his sleeve or a rag from his pocket, and he is ready to leave. But in the meantime the seven o'clock whistle has sounded at the factory and he has a half hour to make it. The trolley trip takes twenty minutes and the walk each way five minutes. Thus he has just time to reach the factory at 7.30, if all goes well.

Vasiliy rushes through the streets like a madman. He must not be late. He was late twice last month. If he is late again he will lose all possibility of getting a *udarnik* card and privileges which go with it. He arrives at the Ismaelovsky station at the end of Number 22 trolley line, and finds a throng of men and women waiting for the car, but there is none to be seen.

"What is the matter," he asks another, "isn't the car running?"

"*Chort yevo znaiet!*" (The devil knows!) was the reply.

"There goes my *udarnik* card," sighed Vasiliy. "There goes my chance to get some dried herring, fruit and *confecti* (candy) for my tea next month."

At 7.30 the tram car hove into sight with people hanging in huge clusters to its sides. As soon as this crowd disembarked, there was such a rush of people that Vasiliy could not get aboard and had to walk to the factory. It was no use hurrying now. He was late anyway. He arrived at nine o'clock. He was an hour and a half late.

When Vasiliy looked for his time-card, he found that it had been removed. Evidently his lateness had already been noted by the timekeeper. He proceeded to his machine only to find his wrench gone. This tool was indispensable for him to operate the lathe. His inquiries among the workers

proved futile. He could not locate the missing tool. He was advised to go to the tool room to get another wrench. When he arrived there he searched the pockets of his ragged trousers only to find to his amazement that his tool check was lost. He could not get another wrench.

In the meantime the bell rang at 11.30 for lunch and he joined the line of workers going to the dining hall. Just before the lunch period, the Proforg, an official appointed by the Party and the trade unions to take charge of the department, passed the word around that there was to be a department meeting at 12 o'clock. We had a department meeting of some kind or other almost daily.

As Vasiliy approached the window to pay for his lunch in advance, he found that he had lost or mislaid his three solitary roubles. He could not pay for his lunch. It was the 15th of the month. The next pay day was the 22nd. Unable to buy any food, he gobbled up greedily whatever remnants of black bread he could find on the tables.

When he came back to the department he found the meeting already in session. The Proforg was speaking, "Comrades, this meeting is called to take up a very serious matter. We have to take up the case of a worker who has been late many times. To-day he was late one hour and a half. This worker has often disturbed the discipline of our department. His name is Vasiliy Vasilieovitch Grubin."

It was generally known throughout the department that Vasilieovitch had often complained about the way things were run in the factory. The administration was determined to get him on some pretext or other, sooner or later. Now the time had come.

"You all know the attitude of Vasiliy Vasilieovitch in the factory," continued the Proforg. "You all know that we cannot allow such a worker to remain among us. Now I call upon you comrades to give your opinion as to what should be done in regard to this worker."

A few workers responded, "We want to hear Vasilieovitch first. He is here. Let him speak." Vasilieovitch was given the floor.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

A NUMBER of foreign delegations arrived for the May 1st Celebration in 1932. Some of the delegates visited our factory and I had an opportunity to witness from behind the scenes how these people are deceived just as I had been.

One day in May an announcement was made at a department meeting that a delegation was coming on the following day, that we would have to stay on a *subotnik* (voluntary labour) in order to clean up and prepare the factory for the visitors. We were instructed to give evidence of our enthusiasm and industry. Above all we were not to talk. This was to be left to the officials.

Accumulated dust, dirt, chips, which had been strewn about for months were quickly swept together under the orders of the propagandists. The machines were wiped clean and oil stains removed from the floor. Oftentimes, in their anxiety, the propagandists would instruct the workers to clean out some necessary machine parts, which would be needed on the following day. But the workers carried out these instructions to the letter, with secret glee, knowing fully that confusion would result therefrom. Sometimes it took us many days to find parts that had been thus removed during one of these cleanings. It took us from four to five hours of arduous labour that day to prepare for the delegation. The workers muttered imprecations under their breath because of this extra labour. "They come here to eat our bread while we starve," was the general comment. "Duraki" (fools), the workers called the expected visitors.

I found out that I too was looked upon with hatred by many workers because of the special privileges which I enjoyed as a foreign specialist. This was true in spite of the fact that I tried my best to defend their interests as far as I could. I could not blame them for their embittered attitude toward me, and toward the foreign delegations in general, when I saw what they had to bear. Many a time I would overhear remarks about the privileges I enjoyed that would bring a blush of shame to my face.

At 10 a.m. the next morning the delegation consisting of fifteen workers from Germany, Czechoslovakia, the United States, France and other countries came to the factory. They were headed by Werner, party instructor of the Foreign Bureau, and a host of interpreters and propagandists through whom the information about the factory was carefully filtered and distributed as they passed through the various corridors of the plant.

The delegates did not see how some workers gave them the Russian equivalent of "razzberries" after they had passed. The workers put their fingers to their ears in derision, and thumbed their noses in the wake of the gullible sight-seers. Sometimes they would spit after the delegation. "All kinds of fools, they bring here," said one. Another turned to me and said, "Well, Smith, they tell us the workers are all starving outside of the Soviet Union. You say these are all workers. They are all well-dressed and well-fed. How is that, Smith?"

What could I say in reply? To make these starving workers go through a farcical performance for the benefit of a few well-fed crackpots from other countries was indeed rubbing it in. "See how they take them like dumb cattle through the factory!" remarked another worker, while the women workers snickered among themselves as the farce was being staged.

After the examination of the factory the delegation was taken to the *stolovaya* (dining-room). Here at last was the only reason for which the workers could be thankful

invited by some "worker" into his home to see how he lived. I longed to say to them, "Why don't you visit the barracks where the real workers live?" But I could not speak out to them then to expose the whole, rotten swindle.

### *Emily Brown Lays Down The Law*

Early in May, 1932, I was looking forward expectantly to the arrival of a Hungarian delegation from the International Workers' Order, a pro-Communist fraternal order in the United States. This group attended the May 1st Celebration in Leningrad. I managed to run into them on my off-day, on May 6th, in the Grand Hotel dining-room, along with delegates from other countries and a large number of tourists.

I sat down beside Sipka, a fellow-party member from Newark, and an Englishman and ordered some coffee and a tiny piece of cake. When the waiter brought the bill it amounted to 9 roubles and 50 kopeks. Out of curiosity the Englishman picked up my bill and expressed his astonishment that I had to pay so much. Even Sipka was somewhat set back.

"How is this?" asked the Englishman.

I explained that the Grand Hotel is not a workers' hotel, that it is under Intourist management for tourists and foreign delegates. The Englishman became thoughtful, for this was contrary to what had been told him by the propagandists. He asked me about how the trade unions function, how many foremen we have and how much I earn. In a guarded way I tried to explain to him as much as I could. Suddenly I felt a pull at my sleeve. I turned around. There was Emily Brown, who was now employed in the Women's Department of the Communist International. She had been listening all the time to what I had been saying. She called me out.

"Oh, let me alone," I said. "Don't you see I am talking to some friends?"

But I could not get rid of her, so I went out into the corridor with her.

"Comrade Smith," she exclaimed, "you have some nerve buying coffee and cake here. Didn't you have breakfast at home? And besides, what do you mean by talking to them in that way about conditions in the factory? That is not your business. As a party member you should not do that. You should talk about other things. You may get into trouble."

"As far as the cake and coffee is concerned," I replied, "I should have been glad to pay less. The situation is not of my making. Why don't you complain to the management of the hotel? As far as factory conditions are concerned, I shall talk as much as I like. You can't threaten me. I still have an American passport and when I have had enough of it here, I can go back. So please mind your own business."

She saw that she had gone too far and tried to patch up matters by assuming a sweet, ingratiating tone. The hotel was full of such solicitous watchers from the various Communist bureaux to see that the delegates did not fall under any harmful influences and perhaps get an inkling of the truth, by chance.

How the party members seek to cover up the true conditions and deceive workers in this country is further illustrated by the story I heard later in regard to Sipka. Sipka went to Czechoslovakia after leaving Russia. In the United States he was sent on a speaking tour by the fraternal society. During his lectures he would display a piece of the sour black Russian bread and say that this was the kind of bread the people had to eat in Czechoslovakia.

There are hundreds of Communists and sympathizers in the United States who have seen with their own eyes the suffering and deprivation of the Russian people, and yet, under the pressure of the Communist Party and its affiliated organizations, they have either decided to keep silent about their experiences or they tell just the opposite of what the true conditions are.

go to their own restaurants as we do here. They have no money to buy any lunch. They sit around on some wooden boxes in the yard and chew on some old black bread which they take out of their pockets. This is all they have to eat. And I thought to myself, this is the great, rich America of which I have heard so much.

"Then I went to New Jersey. I saw men, women and children living in old shanties near the railroad tracks, ragged and starving. Everywhere in America it is the same.

"The street cars in America are empty. Think of it. They are not packed like ours. And do you know why? Because the workers do not have any money for car fare. They have to walk to work, sometimes it takes them an hour and a half or two hours."

A number of workers in the audience had the boldness to put some searching questions to the speaker. A lathe-hand arose and asked:

"Did you see any workers riding in automobiles in America, Comrade M——?"

"That's all bunk," he replied irritably. "The workers do not have enough to live on, so how can they have automobiles? Only the bosses ride in automobiles."

A woman in the tool department asked:

"Are there any well-dressed workers in the United States, or are they all so poor as you have described, Comrade M——?"

M——, dumb as he was, could detect the note of scepticism behind these questions. He began to get excited and rambled off into a long tirade about the terrible unemployment in the United States.

Another asked him whether he had attended any workers' meetings.

"Oh, no," he said, "as a Soviet official in a foreign country, I was not permitted to do this."

During M——'s harangue of an hour and a half, almost every eye was on me as if to say, "Well, what do you think, Smith?" Some of the workers winked slyly and knowingly

at me. I asked for the floor. The chairman at first tried to ignore me, but in response to the insistence of the workers, he granted my request. I was not yet ready to denounce the fakery of M—— in an open meeting, so I had to proceed in a more indirect manner. I said:

"Comrade M——. You were sent to America at the expense of the Soviet Government to investigate methods of improving the production of taps, dies and tools in our factory. You have not mentioned one word on these questions. How is that, Comrade M——?"

He answered: "As far as these matters go, they are not for such a meeting. Such questions will be taken up with the proper bodies at the proper time."

But the real thoughts of the workers came out in their personal reactions after the meeting.

"We don't understand," they said, "how it is that you Americans come here with such good clothes? You, Smith, have sold a lot of good clothes which you brought here? And M—— says everybody is starving in America. How does it happen that so many American mechanics are glad to return to the United States from Russia if everyone is starving there?"

The general consensus of opinion was that the lecture was just "*chepukha*," (nonsense).

## CHAPTER XII

### I VISIT A SOVHOZ AND IVAN IVANOVITCH TELLS HIS STORY

THERE was an unusual stir at the Elektrozavod during the noon hour of July 3rd, 1933. The Proforg announced that there was to be a factory meeting in the workers' hall at closing time. The word went to all departments. In the afternoon a troupe of dancers and accordion players dressed in gay peasant costumes and playing lively Russian airs paraded through the department carrying signs advertising the meeting and concert to be held at the close of work. These were "propagandists." It was evident that an important gathering was to be held.

In company with my fellow-workers of my department I attended the meeting of the ATE, or Automobile, Tractor and Electrical Equipment Division. As we entered the hall there were clerks seated at long tables who registered each worker. Any worker who failed to attend the meeting was blacklisted. He risked his chances of becoming a *udarnik*, or of obtaining premiums or extra food privileges.

The meeting was addressed by officials of the factory, of the Communist Party, of the trade unions and one from the Raminsky Sovhoz. Each of the speakers appealed to the assembly for volunteers to go on a *subotnik* on the 6th, which was our regular day off. We were asked to give our services to the Raminsky Sovhoz to help weed potatoes in order to insure the food supply for the coming winter. Otherwise, we were told, we would have no potatoes. "All out to the Raminsky Sovhoz July 6th," was the slogan. "All out for the *subotnik*." Huge banners carrying similar appeals hung

everywhere on the factory walls. After the speakers had concluded there was a short concert and we left the hall.

On the following day our Proforg was a busy man going from worker to worker, with his tally sheet, "Are you going to the *subotnik*?" It was a case of compulsory "volunteering." Those who did not "volunteer" for this occasion, would have to go some other time during the month. But everybody had to go, except the directors and higher officials and administrative favourites. Sometimes one of these officials appeared for show purposes.

At about six o'clock we boarded a box-car train which was waiting for us on a siding near the factory. Scattered throughout each car were again the ever-present propagandists. To the playing of an accordion or sometimes a brass band, the workers were goaded to sing as they muttered unprintable swear words beneath their breath at having to forego their off-day. To impress other factories on the way and the countryside, the train was placarded with gaily coloured signs: "*Subotnik of Elektrozavod Workers*," as if we were out for a holiday. But we felt about as gay as a chain-gang.

When we arrived at the Raminsky Sovhoz (State farm), which had been assigned to our factory, it was already dark. We were assigned for the night to a long barrack-like structure, which was used as a mess hall during the day. We made ourselves as comfortable as we could on the bare ground. Most of us got very little sleep. I spent the night walking about smoking. It was quite cool and we had no coats or coverings of any kind.

Everybody got up with the breaking of dawn. We got no breakfast. Those who had some bread in their pockets could satisfy their hunger therewith. The propagandists were at us again. They informed us that we were to be assigned to different sections of the farm, and that we were to engage in "Socialist competition" with each other, individually and by groups. We were in no mood to compete for anything except a bed and a good meal.

cooked in large kettles without any fats. The food is not fit for human beings. Many of us get sick. The workers are not interested in producing results. They spoil everything because their conditions are so wretched. Thus tools are thrown around carelessly anywhere and they are either lost or spoiled. As the brigadier, I am responsible, but what can I do? Look here!" he cried, pointing to a potato patch in bloom. "Here it is July and the potatoes are just blooming when we should have a crop of new potatoes by this time. And then when the potatoes are ripe, they are as small as nuts. Most of them are left in the ground to freeze and spoil in the snow. I don't know what we would do if you city workers did not come out here to help us a little.

"What do I have out of life?" he asked. "This is all I possess in the world," he said, pointing to his ragged costume. "I don't even have another rag for a change. Everything is old and rotting on my back. My wife and children are in the same condition. When my wife returns from the city she sometimes comes back with nothing after having paid her market fee and railroad fare. Sometimes the children are luckier. They bring home a little bread which the good people in the city give them. But even then they get very little, for the workers have little to give. If the children try to go begging in the richer parts of the city where the high officials live, they are driven off by the militia or by fierce dogs.

"When I get home after work, my wife is not home yet. I must go the station to meet her. The station is seven kilometres off (four miles). When my family arrives it is very late. We walk to the barracks. The children are so tired that they drop off to sleep without eating anything."

"But if you go on like this," I said, "things will never improve."

"We can't help it. The peasants are dissatisfied with the way things are run. You see those buildings over there. The officials live there. They live well. They live much better than we do, but they do not know how to manage the

farm. They are ruining everything. For instance, there is the *agronom*, a little slip of a girl, no more than eighteen or twenty years of age, with her lipstick and fancy dresses, a chit just out of school, what does she know about the land? Where linseed should be planted, she tells us to plant potatoes, where cabbage should be planted, she wants wheat and rye. When we tell her it is wrong, she says that we don't know anything, that we have no education and that we must do what we are told. Can you blame the peasants for feeling disgusted and disheartened?

"Look here how the grass is rotting under our feet, while the cattle are starving. If you have time, you must come with me. I will show you our tractors which we got only last year. They are new. Yet they are rusting in the fields. When the time comes for ploughing, they will start repairing them. By the time some of the tractors are in working condition the ploughing season will be over. If a peasant should say anything, if he should complain about the management, the Gay Payoo takes him away, and he disappears forever.

"When this land belonged to us, you should have seen how nice it was. The crops were growing beautifully in the fields, potatoes the size of melons, vegetables of all kinds, wheat, rye and many other things. We had pigs, horses and cows. We fed the young cattle with milk because we had too much of it. We never get any milk now for our children. We had chickens, ducks and geese. We would not feed a pig with the food which we have to eat now. Five of our peasants raised more than two thousand people now raise on the Sovhoz. We had no tractors. We had only a horse-drawn plough. Yes, it is hard, *grajdamin*. Things cannot go on this way. They must change some day."

his rapid advancement is that he is a smooth talker, who tells many stories about the terrible conditions in the United States and the wonderful achievements here. There are many others like him.

I myself was just a plain worker in the United States. Here I have been made an engineer. I got this job because I made many complaints and the directors wanted to keep my mouth shut.

Do you think, Comrade Stalin, that we can go ahead in such a way? The Russian workers can see all this crookedness and corruption. The Russian workers know that their leaders in the factory know nothing and live well. On account of this the Russian workers are beginning to doubt about the future of Socialism in the Soviet Union. For this reason the workers are spoiling everything.

Not long ago, I was on a *subotnik* (voluntary labour). We went out to the Kolhoz of the Raminski County to weed potatoes. There I noticed that conditions were the same as in the factory. There were many exacting straw bosses and many thousands of workers. The party members were just strolling about without dirtying their hands. The workers in their resentment just destroyed everything when they got a chance. They pulled the potatoes out by the roots. That is why we do not have a sufficient crop of potatoes.

When we walked on the country roads, we found the holes in the roads filled with manure, while the soil where the potatoes were planted was badly in need of this valuable fertilizer. When we returned to Moscow and I asked the workers why they pulled up the potato plants by the roots, when they know that the country is starving, they answered, "What do we care about it? We never get the good potatoes anyway. The best goes to the high officials and propagandists."

Please take these matters into careful consideration, and appoint a committee to investigate. Send this committee to the factory or to my home and I will give them more facts right in our factory. I am,

Yours for Socialism,

ANDREI ANDREIVITCH SMITH.

About a month after I had sent this letter, a committee of five or six men came to my home. I explained to them how the workers in the factory commit sabotage because of their dissatisfaction. When they have to take a five-millimetre cut on a lathe or a planer, they take a ten-millimetre

metre cut or more, thus spoiling the machine. They remove the covers of the oil cups and the oil cups are filled with chips, steel dust and even glass dust. Thus a machine which should last five or six years, will last only a few weeks before it must be repaired.

They asked me why I had made my complaints direct to Stalin. Did I not know that Stalin is a very busy man and that he did not have time to take up such matters? I told them that I had tried every possible committee in the factory without success. Then they asked me why I had not approached the "Secret Bureau." I told them I had never heard of such a bureau. Then they explained that in the factory was a secret bureau of the Gay Payoo (Political Police).

When I saw that nothing would come of the investigation, that they were simply trying to make excuses instead of handling my complaints, I said to them, "I did not come to the Soviet Union to draw money for nothing. I came here to help build up Socialism. But when I see how conditions are here, and how the system is run with waste and inefficiency, it seems to me that I have no place in this country and that I had better return to America."

They asked me whether the foreign workers are being used according to their knowledge and qualifications.

"No," I replied. "For instance, there is a worker in the factory named Hauf. He was a machinist for the General Electric Company in Chicago. Here he is an engineer with a soft job. He got this job by talking about the terrible starvation in the United States and the wonderful conditions in the Soviet Union. This man is not qualified for his position because of his technical knowledge, but simply because he has a good tongue as a propagandist."

"Do you believe that the American workers are better off than the Russian workers?" asked one member of the committee.

"There is plenty of suffering among the American workers," I replied. "But if the American workers were to live under such conditions as the Russian workers, there would be a revolution in the United States."

## CHAPTER XIV

### GUARDING THE WORKERS' HEALTH

ONE day in June, 1932, I woke up with a sore throat. I was feverish and swallowed with difficulty. I went to work and after lunch proceeded to the First Aid Department. There was a long line of workers waiting for examination, at least twenty-five were ahead of me. There were only two benches, so that most of the workers had to stand, regardless of how weak they were, or whether they were serious emergency cases or not. If a patient demanded immediate treatment, the usual reply of the attendants was, "Well, everybody is sick here, so you will have to wait like the rest."

I remember, for instance, the case of a woman in the Assembly Department on the fourth floor. She fainted one day at her work and she was taken on a stretcher to the First Aid Department. Stretcher and all she had to wait for her turn. There were about thirty others ahead of her.

It was a daily occurrence for workers, men and women, to faint at the bench or machine, due to weakness from lack of food. These were taken as a matter of course to the clinic to wait their turn. One of these named Antonov, a lathe hand who fainted from under-nourishment, I made the subject of a bitter complaint at a meeting of the party factory unit.

My turn for examination did not come until about four o'clock. My temperature was taken and I was told to report on the following day to the Dispensary of the Tenth of October, which was a short distance from the factory.

Before nine o'clock the next morning I was at the Dispensary. There were at least one hundred men and women already ahead of me, standing on line. After waiting for  $2\frac{1}{2}$  hours I arrived at Window Number 4 and was told that

I must go to Window Number 2. I had to stand there for another two hours and finally at about 4.30 I came to the doctor's room. This doctor told me that I had been sent by mistake to the Department of Internal Diseases and that I had to go to the Nose and Throat Section. I had been on my feet from before nine o'clock in the morning. I had not had a bite to eat. I was shaking with fever. I could not stand it any longer and I let loose on the doctor, giving him a furious tongue-lashing for making sick people wait on their feet for a whole day without food, and then shipping them around from place to place like cattle. He saw at once that I was a foreigner and tried to quiet me. It was finally arranged that I was to be taken to the Nose and Throat Department without further waiting.

When I took a look around, in the Nose and Throat Department, where I was to be treated, I felt worse than ever. The instruments which had once been bright and nickel-plated were coated with dirt and rust. They were strewn about on ordinary oaken tables. There was no attempt at sterilization. Instruments were used on one patient after another without sterilizing them. Neither the doctor nor her two nurses wore rubber gloves. The nurses wore dirty linen coats which had long ago ceased being white. But the most disgusting sight of all was the doctor in charge. She was a tall, dark, thin woman of about thirty, heavily rouged and powdered. The line of powder and rouge reached to her neck which was black as coal. Her fingers were covered with rings and her finger nails were deeply rouged. She reminded me of a gypsy fortune teller.

This creature took up a pair of rusty clips to hold my eyelashes and examined my eyes. Then she thrust another dirty instrument into my ear. With another she looked into my nostrils. Finally, she took a long, tarnished and filthy spatula to hold down my tongue while she examined my throat. But I had had enough treatment. I seized the instrument and flung it against the wall. I scattered the entire set of dilapidated contraptions over the floor.

"*Grajdalin!*" exclaimed the doctor in alarm. "What are you doing? Are you crazy?" A number of other patients poked their heads in at the door to see what all the noise was about.

Shaking with fever and disgust I yelled at the top of my voice:

"Aren't you ashamed to use these dirty instruments on the patients? Why don't you clean your filthy neck? I never heard of a doctor with rings on. How can you put on rubber gloves? Why don't you clean and sterilize your instruments sometime, instead of using them from one patient to another? I want to see the head director. I am a foreign worker. I want to know why the Russian workers are treated in this way!" But the director could not be found.

The next day I went to Achmadulin, the secretary of the party unit of the factory. I complained to him and told him of the scandal I had raised at the dispensary. He blushed like a beet, made a note of the matter, and I left. I never heard of the question again. As usual, nothing was done.

I stayed at home for three days, using whatever home remedies my wife could muster, and finally recovered. The story of my exploit at the dispensary spread throughout the factory and occasionally workers would hail me with, "Hey, Comrade Smith, when are you going to the Tenth of October?" or "How do you like the Tenth of October, Comrade Smith?"

### *The Case of Sophie Hornak*

Sophie Hornak, a Hungarian woman from New York, who worked in the lamp department, was stricken one day with an attack of appendicitis and lead poisoning. She was taken to the Baumann Hospital and was there one month. Her experiences will give an inside picture of certain conditions in the Moscow hospitals.

Sophie lay on a hard wooden bed without springs. The boards were covered with a thin cotton mattress. When people died in the hospital, new patients were placed in the same bed,

without any pretence of disinfection or even changing the bedclothes.

On the day after her operation, while she was still in a very weak condition, two male attendants, or rather, labourers, came to her bed. It seems that the nurses' duties consist only of taking temperatures and administering medicine. These labourers seized her roughly by the shoulders and legs, threw her like a log to another bed, while they made her bed. She slept fitfully because of the swarms of flies and bedbugs.

Her food in the hospital consisted of sour black bread, about a half pound each day, black buckwheat *kasha* and some water. No milk, no eggs, no butter, no vegetables, no fruit. The only change in the hospital menu came when she got some food which her friends left for her. From four to six o'clock every day, a long line of people could be seen at the hospital with packages of food for the patients.

Every day the attendant would clean the ward with his long broom consisting of branches, which would bang against the bedposts and disturb the patients, and raise a great dust.

Six days after she left the hospital, Sophie had to report at work. She was in no condition to work. She was in high fever but she had to go, nevertheless. That was the order. The factory doctor did not recognize her as officially sick. Fortunately the factory director sympathized with her and sent her home for a few days at his own expense. One month later she had to go to the hospital again.

In the meantime I had sent a letter, without Sophie's knowledge, to Kaminski, health commissar, explaining her condition and how she had been treated. When she arrived at the hospital again she was called before the chief doctor, who upbraided her severely for writing a letter of complaint. She explained that she knew of no such letter. But her explanations were of no avail. He insisted that she was responsible. Finally, he said to her, "We will cure you on one condition, that you write to Commissar Kaminski that you found conditions improved here and that you are completely satisfied." But Sophie was afraid that they would mistreat her even

## I WAS A SOVIET WORKER

worse than before because of her letter. She decided to go to the Politclinic for treatment. She was there for about nine days at her own expense, but never fully regained her health.

There was a noticeable lack of interest among the doctors and the nurses in their work and in the welfare of their patients. The reason was not far to seek. The doctors receive 250 roubles a month. Since this is not enough to live on in Moscow, they are compelled to seek private patients after hospital hours. The nurses also resort to private patients to supplement their income. This additional income can only come, of course, from the higher paid officials, specialists, technicians, speculators and other professional people.

### *At the Ostromova*

My wife was receiving treatment for her nerves at the Ostromova Hospital near Sokolniki Park. I went to visit her on November 30, 1934, my day off. Visiting hours were between four and six. When I entered the visitors' waiting room at about four o'clock, the room was packed with men and women, from the city and the villages. I took my place on line with the other visitors with my galoshes in my hand.

The procedure at the hospital made it necessary for each visitor to remove his galoshes in order to keep the hospital clean of mud and slush. At the same window I was to receive a white *khalat* (coat). The *khalat* was intended to safeguard both patients and visitors against infection. I waited patiently for an hour and a half. It seemed that there were only fifty *khalats* available and there were at least 300 visitors waiting. The *khalat* would be taken off by some unwashed, vermin-ridden peasant and it would be given to the next visitor on line. The prospect of putting on one of these garments certainly did not attract me.

I decided to see the director of the hospital.

"I have been waiting here an hour and a half already," I said, "I should like to know whether it is really necessary for me to wait so long and to put on one of those coats which

have been worn by all kinds of filthy persons, in order to visit a patient in the neurological ward. Don't you think that all kinds of disease are being spread by the use of these coats by so many people? I, can't wait any longer. I am a foreign worker. I intend to go in to see my wife without putting on one of those dirty coats. Unless you can give me a clean coat, I will go just as I am. If you stop me, I will take the matter up with higher authorities."

As I turned to go, he stopped me and explained apologetically:

"Comrade, you must not blame us because there are not enough coats. You should complain to the Commissariat of Health. It is not our fault. But, considering you are a foreign worker, I will give you permission to go in as you are."

"But what about the others who are waiting on line to go into the neurological ward?" I asked.

Anxious to avoid any further fuss, he gave instructions that all visitors to the neurological ward were to be admitted without *khalats*.

Not far from our home was the Sokolniki group of hospitals, devoted almost entirely to the treatment of venereal diseases. Every day one could see long lines of men and women and even children of school age, waiting in the courtyard for treatment. I was astounded at some of the youngsters I saw there with faces rotting away in cases where disease had already made heavy inroads. The widespread prevalence of sexual disorders is due to the almost complete lack of sanitary resources, the general laxity in marital relations, and the existence of prostitution on an unprecedented scale. The official explanation is, however, that this condition is a heritage from the Czarist régime.

## CHAPTER XV

### EMANCIPATED WOMEN

ONE of the chief tenets of Socialism and Communism is the doctrine that with the abolition of capitalism and wage slavery will come the emancipation of women. No longer are they to be economically and socially submerged. No longer are they to be the weaker sex in a social sense.

In the new society, women are to be freed once for all from kitchen drudgery and they are to take their rightful place beside men as equals in every respect.

And finally, the abolition of capitalism is to remove also the economic basis for prostitution which is thus to be wiped out for all time. That is what I had been taught for many years. How did this conception compare with the life of the women I knew in the Soviet Union? Let me illustrate by a few examples.

#### *Aleksandra Aleksandrovna*

Every two weeks Aleksandra Aleksandrovna came to us at about three-thirty in the morning to do our housework and laundry. She worked until about seven-thirty and then went to the factory where she worked as a laundress, washing and ironing by hand the linen used in the factory ambulatorium (clinic). If she did not complete our work at seven-thirty, she returned at five-thirty, after she was through at the factory.

She had about ten other families for whom she did domestic work, either before or after factory hours. She received 75 roubles a month at the factory. She would refuse any money payment for housework. "What's the use of giving me money? I can't buy anything with it, anyway," she would say.

So we paid her in bread, a half kilo of sugar, a kilo of flour, a kilo of farina, 50 grams of tea, half a litre of linseed oil and sometimes some candy for her five children, who attended school. There were thousands of women like her, working day and night through Moscow.

Aleksandra was forty-two years old. She looked every bit of sixty-five. Her face was thin and pale. From constant soaking in water containing washing soda (*stirel*, the Russians called it), her nails were worn down and yellow. The skin on her palms and knees were like sole leather. She was always complaining about her backache.

Aleksandra was usually attired in whatever cast-off clothes she could secure from her various customers. In winter and summer she wore *volenki* (felt boots) without stockings. These she would remove upon entering our apartment in order not to soil the floor. No efforts on my wife's part could dissuade her from walking on the cold floor barefoot in midwinter. We once gave her some old curtains which she received with gratitude. We found out later that she had made them into dresses for her two girls.

My wife asked Aleksandra about her conditions when she came to our home. She told her that at the age of eighteen she had married a railroad worker, who was killed in an accident six years ago. Her youngest child was born two months later. Aleksandra received 17 roubles a month (about 10 cents in American money) as a pension for the death of her husband.

When Aleksandra had no domestic work to do she speculated in the market. After she had waited on the *ochered* (bread line) from three a.m. until seven, she had to rush to the factory. Her oldest daughter, Shura, would take her place on the line. Sometimes there was no bread delivered at all. In the evening and on her off-day, when she was not washing or cleaning, she would take the articles which she had obtained through her labour and try to exchange them for roubles at a small profit. For instance, she could get 20 roubles for a litre of linseed oil on the market, 15 roubles for a kilo of sugar,

and 10 roubles for a kilo of white flour. With this money she would buy chickens, ducks and herring and re-sell them.

Aleksandra and her five children lived in Strominka Street in a basement with twenty-five others, men and women, married and single. She had to pay 10 roubles a month for each child's tuition and meals at school.

My washerwoman was very religious and would cross herself constantly when we conversed with her. But she feared and hated the Communists far more than the devil, as she confessed to us. My wife tried to defend the Communists. But Aleksandra insisted:

"How can the Communists be good people if they do not give us enough to eat? Under the Czar I made 15 kopeks a day, but I could buy more with the 15 kopeks than I can buy with the 75 roubles I get in the factory. On Sunday I used to buy *piroshni* (Russian cakes). I used to go to church and cook and bake. I had a fine holiday. Now I have to wash and scrub on my day off."

"But the women are free under Communism," my wife declared.

"*Boje moy! Boje moy!* (my God, my God)," she said, "we are more slaves now than under the Czar. We never have any holidays now as we had under the Czar. If this Communism keeps on, we will all be in the grave soon."

### Maria Adamovicovna

In the lamp department of the Elektrozavod worked Maria Adamovicovna. She was about thirty-two years of age. Her husband had died of tuberculosis and she received 17 roubles a month pension toward the support of herself and three children. Her wages were 85 roubles a month, piecework at the factory. After the many deductions there was very little left of her pay.

Maria lived in a dilapidated woodshed near the Sokolniki Park with her children. She was not looked upon with favour by the administration because she never attended demonstra-

tions or meetings. Thus she had little opportunity to become a *udarnik* or obtain the privileges of a higher category.

Maria had no time for demonstrations or meetings. At four a.m. she rose and rushed to the *ochered*. If she was lucky she got some bread after waiting for a number of hours. If she was unlucky and got no bread in the morning, she had to wait again on line after four p.m. when she quit work at the factory.

After having fed her children a meagre meal of *kasha*, black bread and boiled water, she put them to sleep on the bare floor and covered them with rags. Then she spruced up with whatever finery or cosmetics she had treasured away and proceeded to the sidewalks of the hotels where the better-paid foreign specialists congregated—to the Savoy, the Grand or Europe Hotel. If she was fortunate that day, her solicitations were accepted by some man and he paid for her supper before he took her to his room. Sometimes he bought her some rouge or some clothing for her children. At about three a.m. she was back in the house to boil some water for her children's breakfast and the day's routine started all over again.

At the factory she operated a dangerous gas automatic soldering machine. But her mind was not on her work. She was sleepy and tired. She was thinking of her children and what luck she would have that night.

In January, 1935, the Government abolished the bread card system. Now Maria could buy bread in the open market without a bread card. She left the factory and could be seen any day plying the hotel sidewalks in the hope of meeting some generous foreign worker to compensate her for her services.

### *Comrade Rosenberg*

Every morning when I went to lunch at eleven o'clock, I used to see a most unusual-looking woman coming in to work. She was short and fat. Her cheeks were heavily rouged and her lips were thickly coated with lipstick. From the tip of her bright-red finger nails to the soles of her stylish shoes, she was dressed like a frequenter of the White Light district in New

York. I wondered what such an individual was doing in the Soviet Union. Sometime later she addressed us at a party meeting and I found out that she was Comrade Rosenberg, one of the leading factory propagandists, and a graduate of the Lenin School.

She was subsequently promoted to the position of Editor-in-Chief of the *Elektrozavod*, the factory daily newspaper. This was a propagandist sheet which was part of the Government slave-driving machinery. Through its exhortations and savage criticisms of workers who failed to make their quotas, it sought to whip up the workers to constantly increased efforts. The *Elektrozavod* carried the usual laudatory articles of Stalin and the achievements of the Five Year Plan. Comrade Rosenberg had nine or ten subordinate writers who helped with the work.

Comrade Rosenberg had one room in the Elektrozavod apartment house where we lived and another in Elektrozavodskya. She wanted to have two rooms in our house. At first she urged us to move in order to accommodate her, but we refused. One day a German worker named Muka, who lived on the third floor with his wife and two children, was ordered to move, and Comrade Rosenberg moved in with her sister, her mother, a five-year-old girl and her husband, who was studying military engineering at the Military Academy. Although their home was already well furnished, they received a supply of new furniture when they moved in: chairs, a table, a couch, a chifféroque and a set of dishes. Such a gift was unheard of in the life of an ordinary worker. There was much muttering among the other tenants at this flagrant favouritism, but what could we do?

Comrade Rosenberg was in a privileged class by herself in every respect. The chief editor was, of course, in the highest category, receiving 500 roubles a month plus premiums. She had a servant girl to do all her housework. Her shopping was done in the *magazin* (store) restricted to the highest officials, where she could purchase food and goods, which other workers never saw.

One day I was walking with Comrade Rosenberg from the factory to our house. On the way we were accosted by a poor woman begging for alms. As I put my hand in my pocket to give her something, my companion said sternly, "You must not do this, Comrade Smith. These people are lazy and do not want to work. You only encourage them by giving them money or help."

Some days later we were walking together again and as we came near our house we noticed a man and a woman rummaging in the garbage barrels. As we came closer we noticed that they were Adam and Petchenikova, two workers of the Elektrozavod factory. I turned to Comrade Rosenberg and said:

"What do you say now about people who don't want to work?"

She bit her lip and hurried on.

### *Claudia and Victoria*

Claudia and Victoria were two pretty, blonde, buxom village girls who worked in the office of the technical department of the Elektrozavod. They were nineteen and twenty-one years of age respectively. They were Komsomols (Young Communists).

I found that both Claudia and Victoria did not receive 75 roubles a month as did the other girls in that department. They received 150 roubles a month. They never had to live in the barracks and pay in advance as the others did. They lived in an apartment house on the Matroskaya Tishina, and paid when convenient. They were always well-dressed, well-rouged and well-perfumed in strange contrast to the evident poverty of their fellow-women workers. I wondered how this could be.

Claudia and Victoria were in our apartment building almost daily. Across the corridor from our apartment lived two American mechanics, one a bench-hand aged fifty-five and the other a toolmaker aged thirty-two. The two girls were to be seen at the apartment of the two Americans almost daily.

Since there was one kitchen for three apartments, we had to use the same kitchen with the American mechanics. Claudia and Victoria would do the cooking for them. They would appropriate our groceries and dishes. They would leave the kitchen in a filthy condition.

After an all-night drinking carouse, we would find the kitchen or the adjoining corridor covered with the vomit of the two Komsomols. Sometimes one or both of them would be lying in the filth, clad only in light shift, to be dragged inside by one of the mechanics later on. We could not sleep at night for the screaming and dancing. I could not stand it any longer. I demanded of the girls that they change their ways, or I would complain to higher authorities. They laughed in my face and said to me:

"This is a free country. You can't stop us."

I complained to the House Committee, and received a reply that they would investigate. But nothing was ever done about the matter. And I thought to myself, "Is this the youth upon whom the future of the Soviet Union depends?"

Claudia and Victoria were not subject to the same discipline as the other women workers. They did not have to go to *subotniks*. Because of services rendered to various officials in the factory, they automatically were made *udarniks*. The collective agreement regarding hours, wages and working conditions which applied to other workers did not apply to them. When I asked them how it was that they were so exceptionally favoured, Claudia replied saucily:

"They give us more because they like us."

## CHAPTER XVI

### RUSSIAN CHILDREN

IN the Sokolniki section where I lived in Moscow there were many apartment houses in which the workers of various factories lived. It was considered a somewhat better section of the city. But there was no schoolhouse within walking distance. The children in the neighbourhood all had to ride to school, usually accompanied by a parent or *nyanka* (nurse), provided they could afford the car fare.

Here again the category system operated. The better-paid technicians, engineers and propagandists sent their children to the better schools outside of Moscow, the show-places which are displayed to foreign visitors. The ordinary workers' children attended inferior schools, or none at all.

Children are not permitted to enter any of the public parks, museums, zoos or other amusement places in Moscow without paying admission. This excluded the great mass of the children whose parents have not even enough to buy bread.

In connection with the Elektrozavod apartment house there was a kindergarten conducted in the basement and there was an open-air playground. The sixty or more children, whose mothers and fathers were at work in the factory, were left in charge of an old, illiterate peasant woman. The children of the employees in the higher categories did not attend this kindergarten because it was too cold and dirty and the food was too bad. The kindergarten was in a dark, damp basement, the only heat being furnished by a small kerosene stove. A crude seesaw and a few swings made up the total equipment of the playground.

The kindergarten children received one meal a day, for

which the parent had to pay 10 roubles a month. The meal was usually a concoction consisting of a little cooked beets, carrots and potatoes, or a little buckwheat *kasha*. There was no milk, eggs, fresh vegetables, fresh fruit, or butter.

In summer the children went about barefoot. In winter they wore the usual *valenki*. One could see little boys clad in men's coats many sizes too big for them and little girls in all kinds of shabby made-over garments.

Since we had no children of our own, we were not very familiar with the details of child life in school. But what we could not fail to see was the life of the hordes of children who roamed about the streets at all hours.

On almost every street corner in Moscow, it is a common sight to find a scrawny woman seated on the sidewalk, in the mud or snow, with a babe in her arms and three or four children beside her, begging for bread. These groups frequent hospital doorways, factory gates and the public places. Begging is one of the chief occupations of the great mass of the poorer children. It has become a speciality with them, in which they have devised all kinds of artifices to elicit sympathy. We would have an average of at least two hundred of these begging children at our door in a day. As I would look out through the peep-hole I had bored in our door, I could hear the cry, "*Papu, papu.*" (Food, food.) On one occasion a little girl of ten or twelve, clad in a long coat, knocked at the door. When it was opened, she unfolded her coat to show that she was completely naked beneath and begged for a kopek. In response to questions, these children usually claimed to have come from the Ukraine, because of the recent famine there. This was the case even with Moscow children. Women and children would wander thus all day, from floor to floor, in a ceaseless quest for bread or a few kopeks.

Party members like Kaganov, my neighbour, would remonstrate with me when I helped these unfortunates. "They are the children of *kulaks* and priests," he would say. "You should not help them." But I noticed that he helped them himself when he thought no one was watching.

Another common occupation, especially among the boys of from seven to fifteen, is that of speculator in cigarettes. This occupation they carry on during school hours, at factory gates and in the markets. "*Davay zakurit*," (Get a smoke), was their usual cry. Since the ordinary workers could not afford to buy the better brand of cigarettes like "Moskva," at 2.50 roubles a package, they would buy "Sport" cigarettes from the boy venders at 10 kopeks each. The Government sold these cigarettes direct to the boys at a greater profit than if they were sold at 75 kopeks a package of twenty-five through the tobacco stores.

In the poorer workers' section of Moscow, and in fact throughout Russia, there are squalid saloons (*pivnaya*) owned by the Government, in which is usually sold *kvass*, a drink made of fermented black bread and vodka. Swarms of girls and boys of all ages frequent these places to lap up the dregs of the glasses and the remnants of food on the tables. It is a common sight to see young boys and girls wandering about the streets completely intoxicated.

In spite of the advertising the Soviet Government has given to its efforts to wipe out the gangs of *bezprizornyy* (street waifs), they are as numerous and bold as ever. My fountain pen and pencil were stolen in the market by one of these boys one day. It is a common experience to try to board one of the crowded Moscow street cars, and find one of these waifs with a hand in each of your pockets.

Street attacks upon adults by these *bezprizornyy* are a common occurrence in Moscow, particularly late at night. One of my neighbours, a Hungarian woman worker, was attacked by one of these gangs, a cloth was thrown over her head, her pocket-book and fur coat were taken from her, and if she had not managed to scream she might have lost even more.

In the late hours of the night, one can see children of both sexes and all ages, in the doorways and gateways on the side streets of the city. Sexual immorality among these waifs is beyond description. Children try to steal rides on the street

I WAS A SOVIET WORKER  
 cars and are thrown off and struck by speeding autos, but  
 nobody pays any attention to such occurrences. They are  
 taken as a matter of course.

### Nikolai and Kolya

One day at about five o'clock, after I had come home from work, I heard a knock at the door. I opened it and there stood two children, a boy and a girl, each about ten years of age. The girl was cleanly and modestly dressed, but the boy was barefoot and quite ragged. The girl spoke up, "Dyadya, yest khlebushka?" (Uncle, do you have any bread?) She was extremely pretty, with large black eyes and long black hair, but very thin. She spoke with the seriousness of a grown-up. I asked her, "Where do you come from?" She answered, "From the Ukraine."

"Come in, rebyata (little ones)," I said. I gave them each a chair and asked their names. The boy was Nikolai and the girl, who did all the talking, was Kolya. I made them an offer.

"You are not from the Ukraine, you know. Come now," I said, "you tell me the truth about it and I will give you something nice to eat. Where are you really from?"

Kolya then admitted that they were not really from Ukraine, but from Moscow. I asked them where they lived. "We live in a basement at the Preograjensky Hall," she answered.

"Where are your parents?"

Again she replied, "My mother is working at the Lepse factory. And Nikolai, he has no father or mother. His mother was taken away by the Gay Payoo, three years ago. I don't know why. He is my cousin. He lives with us."

"And where is your father?" I asked.

"I have no father," Kolya answered. "My father died three years ago; he was poisoned by something he ate." "Isn't your mother home now after her work? Isn't she on the first shift?" I queried.

"Oh, yes," Kolya responded. "But she never gets home until nine or ten o'clock. She always works late."

"Where is your father, Nikolai?" I said, turning to the bashful youngster.

"I don't know," he replied under his breath.

"But you do know," burst out the impetuous Kolya. "Why don't you tell him?"

But Nikolai refused to talk.

Then the irrepressible Kolya continued:

"You know, *dyada*, when his mother was taken away, Nikolai's father left with another woman."

"Do you have to go out begging?" I asked. "Don't you have enough at home?"

"Oh, no, *dyada*," replied the black-haired little girl sagely, "my mamma makes very little. We don't have enough for clothing and food. You see, Nikolai is barefoot and his pants are torn. Mamma does not make enough. That is why we must go out to look for good people to help us."

"Do you go to church, Kolya?" I inquired.

"Oh, yes. We go when we can, when Mother is not working."

"And did your father go to church when he was alive?"

"Oh, no, *dyada*, he was a Communist."

"And how about Nikolai's father?" I asked.

"He was a Communist too," Kolya replied.

"Do you go to school?" was my next question.

"We go to school a half-day," was the reply. "The school is crowded. There is no room for everybody. Some children go in the morning, and some in the afternoon."

Then I gave them some soup and white bread, which they ate greedily and with the utmost relish.

"This is wonderful soup," chattered Kolya as she gobbled up her portion. "We never get soup like this at home. My mamma never cooks anything. She has no time. All we have is bread and *kipiatok* (boiled water)."

"Doesn't your mamma get enough bread from the factory?" I asked again.

"We get three pounds every day. Every morning before

school I go on the line to get bread. My mamma gets two pounds on her card from the factory and I get one pound on my card."

"But what about Nikolai," I interjected. "Doesn't he get one pound?"

"No. Nikolai has no bread card, you see, because he is not registered as a member of our family."

The Government refuses to register deserted children like Nikolai and therefore they are not entitled to the rations given to ordinary children.

"Then what do you do with the bread?" I inquired. Kolya spoke like a mature housewife:

"Then I go on the market and sell it for six roubles. You see, we need money for clothing, rent, kerosene and other things."

I packed up a bundle for the two urchins, containing four of Knotek's shirts, one shoe (which they could sell on the market), candy, white bread, *psheno* (a cereal) and a few other useful articles. Kolya left with a gracious "*Bolshoye spasibo,*" (Thanks very much) and Nikolai followed without a word.

#### THE PICKPOCKET BY MARIA SMITH

I was walking one day through the Preobrazhenka Market, in the Sokolniki district. I noticed a ragged boy of about twelve years of age following a peasant woman, with a short coat. The woman had five roubles protruding from her coat pocket. I decided to keep watch of the boy and see what happened. As the woman reached the milk peddler's stall, I noticed the boy edging up toward her with the evident intention of picking her pocket. I rushed up and cried:

"Here, you, what are you trying to do?"

With a sharp glance at me, he replied:

"It's not your business . . ." adding some rich profanity. And he ran swiftly away.

In a few minutes I had forgotten the entire incident and continued with my purchases. As I approached the market

gate on leaving, I noticed an unusual crowd. There were about twenty-five or thirty boys ranging in age from about twelve to fourteen. Some were ragged and barefoot, and some were better dressed. The little lad whose plan I had frustrated was in the front, apparently waiting. As I drew nearer he cried, pointing at me, "There she is!" He raised his hands and stopped me.

The lad spoke up sternly, "Listen here, *grajdanka*. See, these are all my friends! Next time, if you see somebody stealing something, then close your eyes." He came closer and pointed his finger in my face, "If you do that again, we will kill you."

"Suppose I call the militia," I replied.

There was a roar of laughter from the gang of boys as my young friend snapped:

"And who's afraid of the militia?"

It was, fortunately, broad daylight, and there were many people about, otherwise I might have fared badly.

## CHAPTER XVII

### HOW RUSSIAN WORKERS LIVE

ALTHOUGH the Soviet Union boasts that it is the land of no unemployment, we witness the strange fact that workers who *are* employed are engaged in a daily struggle to live on their meagre incomes. I have selected at random typical cases of workers of my acquaintance. A comparison between their expenses and their incomes will show most plainly the nature of their problem. In figuring out the Russian worker's budget, we must keep in mind that there are numerous compulsory deductions from his wages for various State purposes.

The State Loan Contribution, for instance, is called a voluntary tax, but actually it is compulsory. Over two months before the loan pledges are circulated, the factory is flooded with propaganda using every possible form of pressure and appeal, in order to impress upon the workers the necessity of contributing. There are speeches during the lunch hour. Signs are displayed all over the factory. The compulsion is far greater than that exercised in American factories during the Liberty Loan drive. The workers are plainly given to understand that failure to sign a pledge means the loss of employment. Finally, it should be understood that although it is called a State Loan, it is actually a straight contribution. After three months there is a drawing or lottery scheme whereby some fortunate worker receives his money back with interest. But the great mass of contributors have no hope of ever having their money returned.

Contributions to the State Loan amount to at least ten per cent of the worker's salary as a minimum contribution. Ten monthly instalments are paid thus making a full month's salary

in all. This is deducted from the worker's pay envelope by the factory.

The Income Tax, two per cent and up, is collected from the pay envelope by the factory. This deduction is made from every category of worker down to the lowest paid. No one is exempted. The higher categories pay a higher percentage, however.

Everybody had to pay the Culture Tax, about two per cent, which was intended for the support of the schools. This tax was collected from each pay envelope at the factory and was also proportional, the higher categories paying a higher tax.

Union dues are graded according to the wage scale, from one per cent upward, with a one-rouble minimum. They are collected by a special collector in the factory. Union membership and payment of dues are compulsory, the penalty being the loss of the job.

Foreign workers, whose stay might be temporary, were exempted from some taxes and contributions which other workers were called upon to pay.

Every worker is expected to subscribe to at least two newspapers. They may choose *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, *Moscow Evening*, *Workers' Moscow*, or *Elektrozavod* (the factory paper). A subscription is 2.50 roubles, the money being collected by collectors in the factory.

There are a number of voluntary organizations. Workers are expected to join at least two of these in order to be in good standing with the factory administration. Every pay day a horde of collectors assail the workers from every side. Among these organizations are the Village Aid, Autodor, or fund for the building of automobile roads, Osoaviachim or Soviet Defence Fund for Development of Aviation and Chemical Warfare, First Aid (equivalent to our Red Cross), the Free Thinkers' Society, the International Labour Defence or MOPR, the International Workers' Aid, sports organizations, the Komsomols, and many other organizations approved by the Soviet Government.

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Every Russian worker had to belong to the Food Co-operative, a consumers' organization with no benefits of any kind, as far as I could determine.

*Case 1.*—M— was an Hungarian-American worker at the Elektrozavod factory earning 120 roubles a month, which is higher than the wages of the average Russian worker. His monthly expenses were as follows:

	<i>Roubles</i>
Rent—(in the factory apartment house, which is cheaper than rent elsewhere, the privilege being accorded to M— because he was a foreign worker) .....	25
State Loan Contribution.....	12
Income Tax .....	3
Culture Tax .....	3
Union Dues .....	2
Hungarian Workers' Club Dues .....	4
Electricity .....	5
Gas .....	6
<i>Total</i> —exclusive of food, clothing, etc. .....	60

M— and his wife were entitled to 3 pounds of white bread a day at 1.03 roubles per pound, making 92.70 roubles for the month, which is already more than what he has left from his non-food expenses. M— gets his white bread at the Insnab (foreigners' store). His wife exchanges bread on the market for other food. They sell various articles of clothing they have brought with them from the United States. They can cover this deficit only as long as these articles last.

*Case 2.*—Siderov was a worker on the shaping machine in the tool department. He lived on the Matroskaya Tishima, in a basement with thirty others. His wife and two children lived in a barrack in Tzaricin, a little village outside of Moscow. His wife works on the railroad. Siderov's wages are 110 roubles a month, and his wife makes 75 roubles. Here are their expenses, exclusive of food:

SIDEROV:	<i>Roubles Kopeks</i>	HIS WIFE:	<i>Roubles Kopeks</i>
Rent .....	15	Rent .....	10
State Loan .....	15	State Loan .....	7
Union Dues ....	2	Union Dues ....	1
Income Tax ....	3	Income Tax ....	2
Culture Tax ....	3	Culture Tax ....	2
House Co-operative..	15	School Lunch for 2 children .	20
Food Co-operative..	6	Village Aid .....	25
Electric .....	2	MOPR.....	25
MOPR.....	25		
Autodor.....	25		
Insurance .....	1		
Paper.....	5		
Total .....	67	Total .....	43

Siderov had filled out an application for a room in a co-operative apartment house which was to be built. He was anxious to get a better room in view of the general housing shortage. The shortage of rooms is so great that a considerable number of workers slept on the floor in the factory. The co-operative collected money in advance for the rooms in the co-operative apartment house. Siderov had been paying for three years. There was no guarantee as to when the building would be started. Some workers had been paying in to this fund for six years without getting anything for their money. Usually the administration favourites received first call when a building was finally completed.

Since their main article of food is bread, the Siderov family needs at least six pounds a day. They do not get white bread, but the usual black, heavy, sour bread, which the ordinary Russian worker eats. At 40 kopeks a pound, their bread bill amounts to 72 roubles for the month. Thus they have practically nothing left for clothing, shoes or any other kind of food, or even for car fare. Siderov is forced to find means of supplementing his income. After working hours, and on his off days he goes to the market and speculates in fish, candy, kasha, or other cereals, meat or other products.

Case 3.—J— was a Hungarian-American woman worker in the lamp department. She was a piece-worker. Her wages averaged about 100 roubles a month including piece-work and overtime. She had two children. Her expenses, exclusive of food and clothing, were as follows:

	Roubles	Kopeks
Rent in the Elektrozavod apartment house.....	18	
State Loan (200% of a month's salary in ten payments) .....	20	
Income Tax .....	2	50
Culture Tax .....	2	50
Union .....	2	
MOPR .....		25
Osoaviachim.....		25
Village Aid .....		50
Gas .....	9	
Electricity .....	8	50
School (Meals for one child) .....	10	
Hungarian Club Dues .....	1	50
Car fare for children .....	15	
Paper—subscription .....	5	
<i>Total</i> —exclusive of clothing, food, etc. ....	95	

J— had to sell her American clothing in order to raise enough to live on. She was left without a winter coat and other necessities after a few months' stay. It might be asked why she contributed 200 per cent of a month's salary toward the State Loan instead of the usual 100 per cent. The explanation is to be found in the following story.

The collector for the State Loan was making the rounds of the department in order to get pledges. At first J— refused to make any pledge. She told the collector that she could not afford it, that she did not make enough to live on, that she had to sell her clothing in order to get along somehow. But the collector was persistent, of course, since his own neck was at stake. Finally J— in desperation said:

"Oh, take my entire salary. I don't make anything anyway."

But the collector would not hear of this.

"Well, then take 200 per cent, 300 per cent. Take whatever you like," she cried.

She was finally put down for 200 per cent and the following day her picture was displayed in the corridor as one of the enthusiastic American workers who had *volunteered* to contribute 200 per cent of her monthly salary to the State Loan.

*Case 4.*—Yogorova was the watchwoman at the door of the Elektrozavod factory. She came of a higher-class family. Her father had been an officer under the Czar. Yogorova lived in an apartment on Pokroka Street. She earned 60 roubles a month. The following were her expenses exclusive of food and clothing:

	Roubles	Kopeks
Rent—(as a Russian worker she was not entitled to live in the Elektrozavod apartments. She rented a corner of a room in another apartment on Pokroka Street. She did not want to live in the barracks).....	100	
State Loan .....	6	
Union .....	1	50
MOPR .....		25
Insurance for 1,000 rouble death benefit .....	1	
Paper—subscription .....	5	
Building Co-operative.....	15	
Food Co-operative .....	6	
Income Tax .....	1	50
<i>Total</i> —exclusive of food, clothing, etc. ....	136	25

How did Yogorova manage to cover her expenses of 136.25 roubles exclusive of the cost of food and clothing, on a salary of 60 roubles a month? She had in her possession an old sewing machine, an heirloom from her mother. This she kept as a treasure in the corner she had rented, along with her bed, a table and two chairs. When she finished work at the factory, she did odd jobs of sewing and dressmaking for the wives of the higher technicians, engineers and propagandists. Dresses were high. Sometimes she would receive as much as 125 roubles for one dress, even though this private trade was severely frowned upon by the government, and heavily taxed. Yogorova did not pay any tax, however. The material which was left over from the garments she made, she sewed up into neat-looking garments for herself. The only reason she went to

work in the factory at all, was that she had to do this in order to get a bread-card, and in order to register and receive her passport. In 1933 a regulation was adopted by the Government that everybody who was not registered as a worker in a certain factory had to leave Moscow. Ygorova safeguarded herself by working as a watchwoman.

*Case 5.*—Petchenikova was a woman seasonal labourer, of the type doing heavy manual labour in all parts of the Soviet Union. She would be paired up with another woman and together they carried between them a four-handled wooden carrier bearing bricks or stone. Or she carried in each hand a heavy bucket of plaster. These burdens she bore as she trudged up and down the plank gangways of the floors of a new garage which was being built for the Elektrozavod. She was usually barefoot, for building operations were carried on in the warmer weather. Her feet were always scarred and bruised. Her clothing was nothing but filthy rags.

Petchenikova lived in one of the barracks. She had four children who lived with her sister in the near-by village of Pushkino. She earned 40 roubles a month. Here are her usual expenses, exclusive of food and clothing:

	Roubles
Rent in the barracks .....	6
Union .....	1
School meals for four children.....	40
<i>Total</i> —exclusive of food, clothing, etc. ....	47

Petchenikova used to dig in our garbage pail for potato peelings, pieces of bread or a bone, which she used to suck with relish when she found one. We used to give her whatever we could spare. She would cook the vegetable peelings and leftovers into a stew, over her kerosene stove. But still she did not have enough to supply herself and her children with the barest necessities of life. At night she would frequent the saloons in the poorest part of Moscow, selling her body for whatever remuneration she could get.

*Case 6.*—Adam was a watchman on the same garage. We used to call him "*Dyadya*" (Uncle). He had long black

whiskers and an old fur cap. His feet were covered with the usual rags. He wore a *shuba* (sheepskin coat) which looked as if it might be an heirloom. Nobody knew what he wore underneath, if anything at all. Nobody knew where "Dyadya" lived. He also used to pick over the garbage in the house where we lived and place his collections in his *sunka* (bag) to take off somewhere. We foreign workers always saved something for him when he went on his rounds.

One day my wife heard loud yelling in the yard near the fence. Anxious to find out what it was about, she went out. She found Adam in a heated quarrel with Peter, a hod-carrier at the new garage being constructed for the Elektrozavod.

"Don't pick in my garbage, you—" the old man was saying, adding a wealth of unprintable profanity, as they stood near my garbage box.

The storm rose high as to the picking rights in my garbage box. Peter insisted that there was little to be found in the garbage of the Russians. He preferred the garbage of the Americans. "Here at least I can find something."

My wife decided to intervene, before it came to blows. She told them not to fight but to wait for a few minutes. She returned with a loaf of bread for each of them and chased them away from the garbage box.

*Case 7.*—Chamadurova worked on a milling machine. She had three children, eight, ten and twelve years of age. She lived in a small, dilapidated wooden shack on Pokroka Street. As a worker with some skill, she was in the fourth category and earned 120 roubles a month. Her expenses, exclusive of food and clothing, included the following:

	Roubles	Kopeks
Rent .....	15	
State Loan .....	12	
Income Tax .....	3	
Culture Tax .....	3	
Union Dues .....	2	
MOPR .....		25
Auto Road Aid .....		25

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	Roubles	Kopeks
Insurance .....	1	
Electricity .....	5	
House Co-operative.....	12	
Food Co-operative.....	6	
School Meals .....	30	
Paper—subscriptions .....	5	
<i>Total</i> —exclusive of food, clothing, etc..	94	50

LIDA AND JOE  
BY MARIA SMITH

Lida and Joe Bombak lived on the ground floor in our apartment house. He was a young German labourer of twenty-one. He married Lida, a young Russian girl of sixteen, with blonde, fluffy hair. As an unskilled worker, Joe could earn only 150 roubles at the Elektrozavod. About a year after they were married, Lida gave birth to a baby girl. She was the image of Joe.

One day I met Lida in the corridor crying. She complained that she had a terrible headache.

"Why don't you go to see the doctor, Lida?" I asked.

"The doctor won't do me any good," muttered Lida. "What can the doctor do for me? I haven't enough to eat. My little baby is starving. That's why I have a headache. What can the doctor do?"

I hurried to my room and brought her some milk, farina, butter, bread, tea, sugar and five roubles. When I returned with the packages, I found Joe had already come back from work. He was holding his wife in his arms and attempting to quiet her.

"Why do you cry before all these people?" Joe reprimanded Lida. "Aren't you ashamed?"

"Well, I don't care," she burst out. "Why do you always try to cover everything up and hide our condition? Why shouldn't we tell these people that we are starving? Why shouldn't they know the truth?"

After that I had to do a great deal of persuading before they

would accept what I had brought. They insisted that they would repay me.

About two weeks later, Joe came to my room. He was heart-broken and in tears. At first he could scarcely speak to me. Finally, he managed to stammer out:

"Comrade Smith, maybe you have a half-loaf of bread you can spare. You see, it is not for me. It is for the baby."

I gave him a loaf of bread and about half a pound of butter which I had at home. He was unable to utter his thanks, and left hurriedly.

In the same corridor with the Bombaks lived the Tengerdy and Reitz families. Tengerdy and Reitz were both foreign American specialists receiving comparatively high salaries. They had one child each. These children, of course, did not lack for food. Once the sight of these children eating, in the face of the starvation of her own babe, so infuriated the young Lida that she became temporarily crazed. She bit Mrs. Reitz on the arm.

One day Joe was notified that he had to become a Russian citizen because his German passport had expired. He told me the news when I met him in the courtyard.

"Just imagine," he said, "they want me to be a Russian citizen. We are starving now. What will they do to me when I surrender my rights as a German citizen? I will never do it. I will go back to Germany."

"Well, what will become of Lida and the baby?" I asked.

"Maybe she will get some work until I can bring her to Germany," he said.

He had to return quickly, he was told. He left in four days and I heard that he got a job as a mail carrier as soon as he got to Germany.

Soon after Joe left for Germany, a woman party member in the Elektrozavod was assigned to live in the room with Lida and the baby. This woman began to intrigue, in order to get Lida out of her apartment so that she might have the room alone. Lida, in order to prevent this, had to secure a job in the same factory at 65 roubles a month, from which she had to

support herself, her baby, and an old peasant woman whom she employed to take care of the child.

We were all sitting in the yard one summer evening after supper, when Lida rushed out shrieking. She came up to us crying:

"You American *svinia* (sows) come here to eat all the food! That is why we have to starve here!"

I tried to calm her. "Lida!" I cried. "What are you doing? What are you talking about? You must not talk that way! Someone will report you."

"I don't care," she shrieked. "Let them report me! Let them put me in jail! At least, I will have something to eat, for me and my baby."

Wild-eyed and dishevelled she flew back to her room.

The next day I met Lida on the stairway. She begged my forgiveness for her outburst on the previous day. She had been to the German Consul about her papers for going to Germany. The German Consul had approved her papers, but it would take at least six months before the various Soviet bureaux would go through the necessary red tape to permit her to leave the country.

About a month after the incident in the courtyard, Lida was summoned to the police station. A number of foreign tenants testified that she had abused them as "swine." I was also called as a witness, but I refused to report. Lida was fined 70 roubles from her pay.

Lida was now worse off than when Joe was with her. Every day she grew thinner and more wretched. Finally she too had to resort to the only course open to Russian women, who have not enough to live on. She had to sell her body to the German mechanics in the building. We women could not reproach her. We knew that she had no other way out.

Throughout this period the girl, who was now but eighteen, continued to pine for her husband. At last, after six weary months of waiting and wretchedness, the long-awaited visa came and she left for Berlin to join her beloved Joe.

Frank Wikukel was a Hungarian Communist, who had been deported from the United States. He was a *udarnik* and an administration favourite.

On May 6, 1932, we were talking in his apartment about the recent May 1st demonstration. I was visiting the Wikukels with my wife. We had not yet found out about the conditions prevailing in Moscow. We were still full of enthusiasm. My wife remarked about how happy the people seemed during the demonstration, how merrily they danced, in spite of the reports about misery and starvation.

Wikukel replied philosophically:

"Well, those Russian *duraks*, they will dance the whole day long for you, if you fill their stomachs once a year. You see, they got some eggs and pot cheese on April thirtieth. That is why they were so happy. Give them one good meal and they forget about the whole year's starvation."

When I heard this remark from a Communist, I began to open my eyes, and to think.

On another occasion, we visited Tengerdy and his wife at his apartment on Preobrazhenka Street, Number 24. Tengerdy was also a Hungarian-American Communist and an administrator to-day. We were discussing the reports that there was starvation in the Ukraine and the Caucasus. We asked Tengerdy about the truth of these reports. He had been in the Caucasus for a year.

"Certainly it is true," he replied. "But what does it matter if a million or more lives are lost, as long as we are building Socialism?"

These remarks were typical of the cold-blooded attitude of the Communist Party *udarniks* and officials toward the sufferings of the Russian people.

The militiamen in the market were usually poor working-men, who sympathized with those who were trying to sell some bread in order to get other needed products. Occasionally they had to make an arrest in order to keep their records straight.

One day I was in the Preobrazhenka Market, when I saw a crowd about one of these militiamen. He had arrested a poor peasant for selling bread. As the accused droned out his name and address (those arrested usually gave an exceptionally long name and address, which were usually fictitious), the militiaman with great effort was trying to write down the information in his book.

It took him about twenty minutes to go through this unaccustomed clerical work, while behind his back and all around him the vendors were lustily advertising their wares, and selling their bread to anyone who would buy.

THE OLD MAN AT THE ROCK PILE  
BY MARIA SMITH

March, 1934, was a freezing month in Feodosia, most unusual weather for this part of the country. One bitter cold day I was walking near the hospital where I was staying, when I saw an old man of at least seventy, breaking stone with a heavy hammer on the street. His bare hands were blue with cold. His clothes were in tatters. His feet were encased in the usual filthy rags. I was surprised to see anyone doing this kind of work in such cold weather. I approached him and greeted him with:

*"Zdravstvuiye, diedushka,"* (Be in good health, old man).

*"Zdravstvuiye, grajdanka,"* he replied, astonished at the cordial greeting from such a comparatively well-dressed person as I appeared to be, in poverty-stricken Russia.

"Don't you feel cold?" I asked him.

"Very cold, *grajdanka*, but I have to do my work, you know," he replied.

"How is it that an old man must work on a day like this?" I asked. "I thought that old men like you receive a pension and do not have to work."

"Yes, I get a pension," he replied. "But it is not enough to buy a crust of bread."

"And how much do you get for this work, *Diedushka?*"

"I get seventy-five roubles for breaking seven piles of stone like this," he said, pointing to the pile nearest to him.

"How long does it take you to break seven piles of stone?"

"Sometimes six, sometimes seven weeks. You see, an old man like me cannot work fast."

"That is impossible," I said. I could not believe that such an insignificant wage could be paid to anyone.

"Well, if you don't believe me, ask the other old fellows working over there! Ask them what they are getting!" and he pointed to two other old men working on the same street.

"What can you buy with that?" I asked incredulously.  
"How can you live on that?"

"We go down to the seashore and catch the minnows which are cast on the beach. We eat them raw with a piece of black bread. Of course, we have to watch out for the employees of the Fishing Trust. If they see us, they chase us away."

"Where do you live? How much do you pay rent?" I asked.

He pointed a gaunt finger to some shacks at the foot of the nearby hill. He paid ten roubles a month rent for one of these. At the top of the hill were the homes of the former Russian aristocracy. The Gay Payoo and party officials lived there now.

"Do you have any family?"

"Yes. I live with my wife, but she is sick. She cannot work. She stays at home. I had four sons. They all died in the Revolution."

"If you had four sons who died in the Revolution, do you deserve to have to work like this in the bitter cold?"

"Hush, hush, *grajdanka*," he cried, raising a warning finger. "You must not talk like that. Someone might hear you."

"Don't worry, *Diedushka*," I assured him. "I am an American. You have nothing to fear from me."

Somewhat reassured, he dared to vent his feeling to me.

"See," he said, "that is what I have out of the Revolution. Breaking stones in my old age, while the big cattle are enjoying themselves in the Kremlin."

From time to time thereafter, I used to meet him and give him a piece of bread or some walnuts, for which he was most grateful. We struck up a real friendship and my fellow-patients used to make fun of me and charge me with having a new sweetheart.

One day I went in to the *obstchaya kukhina* (general kitchen) in the general house where a friend of mine lived. There I saw about twenty housewives crowded around a huge wood stove. Some were the wives of ordinary workers while others were the wives of the *udarniks*.

I approached some of the women and said:

"Why do you all have to stand around the stove? Are you afraid the stove will run away? Why don't you go into your apartments and let the food cook?"

A *udarnik's* wife, who was fortunate enough to have some meat in her pot, answered me with unconcealed sarcasm:

"Not the stove, but the meat will run away, *grajdanka*."

At that moment a heated dispute arose between two of the women. One of them had run off with the other's fried potatoes. As the culprit was returning with the empty pan, she was confronted by her irate accuser. The resultant hubbub can be imagined. The *udarnik's* wife turned to me knowingly and said:

"You see what happens if we leave the stove!"

## CHAPTER XVIII

### MOSCOW SHOPS

To get an idea of what it costs a Russian worker to live, there must be a word of explanation regarding the complicated system of selling products. All workers do not have access to the same stores. There are various categories.

First there is the Workers' Co-operative Store, which is connected with each factory and is located near it. Here, only the cheapest and most inferior quality food and other articles is sold, even though the scale of prices may be the same as in the other shops. The health department in any American city would never permit the public sale of such goods. Tiny, rotten potatoes, green, worm-eaten apples, decayed fish and so on. The better grades of goods are not handled in these shops. The quota of goods assigned to these shops per worker is far lower than it is in the shops patronized by the higher categories. For instance, the workers are entitled to 800 grams (about two pounds) of butter a month, according to their collective agreement, but they can rarely buy more than 200 grams (about one-half pound) and this is usually low-grade margarine, instead of butter. There is even discrimination between factories, some receiving better food than others. In this respect the factories supplying munitions, airplanes and military equipment are favoured.

Purchases in the Co-operative are limited to a certain quota for each article. The lines in the Co-operative are longer and shopping is a full day's work. Since the factories are run by the Government, the Co-operative must be considered a Government-owned institution.

The members of the so-called Co-operative do not have the

right to elect officers, to decide on premiums and to deal with other important matters of administration, rights such as are enjoyed by members of real Co-operatives in other countries. All officers and all policies are determined from the top down by the party. It is a Co-operative in name only.

Those who find the supplies furnished by the Co-operatives inadequate, who have some additional money, may make their purchases in the open market. These are of two kinds, the first run directly by the government and called the "Government Stores," and the second the "bazaars," where the peasants and speculators carry on their traffic. The Government Stores have been nicknamed by the workers "museums" because of the high prices and luxurious displays, which make them inaccessible for the ordinary impoverished worker. Only the highly paid technicians, directors and propagandists can afford to patronize these shops.

The great mass of the poor people frequent the bazaars. Here they can exchange one product for another. The most important medium of exchange, constituting in fact the currency of the country, is bread. For bread you can buy anything. Here may be found the peasants with milk, vegetables and sometimes a chicken or a duck. Then there are also private speculators dealing in miscellaneous wares. Everything is sold here from various groceries to the filthiest rags and outworn odds and ends. The dealers must pay two roubles a day to the Government for a place in the market and a yearly tax, besides.

There are separate shops or "closed *magazins*" for the higher categories, for the engineers, technicians, Gay Payoo officials, propagandists, writers, military officers, and other favoured groups. The big shots in the Kremlin have their own *magazins* behind the Kremlin wall, out of sight of the people of Moscow. In these shops the articles sold are of the highest quality. There is a watchman at the door. You cannot enter or buy unless you have the particular *talon*, or food-card required. Workers are not permitted to enter.

One day I was walking on the Tverskaya, now Gorky Street. A little girl was passing near me with her mother, and I heard

her say, as they passed one of these "closed magazins": "Mamma, look at the nice apples. Buy me one." The mother replied, "My dear girl, I can't buy you one of those apples. They are not for us."

Foreign workers usually patronize the Torgsin, if they have any foreign currency. Russians who receive foreign money orders can purchase articles with them here. The Torgsin accepts jewellery in exchange for products. A woman friend of mine received thirty-five kopeks for a heavy silver soup spoon. Another received 1.25 roubles for a heavy eighteen-carat gold ring. This will give some idea of the rates paid for such articles.

The Torgsin has the finest products, such as are never seen in the Workers' Co-operative Stores. For instance, expensive and necessary medicines can only be obtained here. The ordinary Russian worker will dig up some old and treasured heirloom (if he is fortunate enough to still possess it) and exchange it for some needed medicine for some member of the family. If he does not happen to have any jewellery he is just out of luck, as far as his ability to purchase the medicine is concerned, and he must do without it. Certainly, he cannot hope to buy it on his meagre wages.

The following table will give some idea of the prices charged for articles in the various shops of Moscow:

	WORKERS' CO-OPERATIVE STORES <i>Price in Roubles</i>	GOVERNMENT STORES <i>Price in Roubles</i>
Rye bread from flour, 95% grist— per kilo .....	1·00*	1·00
Wheat bread from flour, 85% grist— per kilo .....	3·40*	3·40
Wheat bread from flour, 70% grist— per kilo .....	not sold	8·00
Rye flour, 95% grist, per kilo .....	2·50*	2·50
Wheat flour, 85% grist, per kilo ....	3·40*	3·40
Wheat flour, 70% grist, per kilo ....	not sold	10·00
Millet, crushed, 1st grade, per kilo ..	3·00*	3·00
Buckwheat, lowest grade, per kilo ..	5·00*	5·00

## I WAS A SOVIET WORKER

	WORKERS' CO-OPERATIVE STORES <i>Price in Roubles</i>	GOVERNMENT STORES <i>Price in Roubles</i>
Farina, lowest grade, per kilo .....	6·00*	6·00
Rice, lowest grade, per kilo .....	10·00*	10·00
Macaroni, from flour 72% grist, per kilo .....	5·00*	5·00
Potatoes, lowest quality, per kilo....	.55	
Beef, lowest quality, per kilo .....	3·28	12·00
Beef, best quality, per kilo .....	5·00	16·00
Pork, lowest quality, per kilo .....	5·10	16·00
Pork, best quality, per kilo .....	16·00	25·00
Sausage, lowest quality, per kilo ....	12·00	25·00
Sausage, best quality, per kilo .....	20·00	35·00
Salami, dried, lowest quality, per kilo .....	18·00	35·00
Salami, dried, best quality, per kilo..	35·00	50·00
Fish, lowest quality, per kilo .....	2·50	12·00
Fish, better quality, per kilo.....	10·00	25·00
Smoked fish, lowest quality, per kilo.	7·00	15·00
Smoked fish, better quality, per kilo.	35·00	50·00
Canned fish, lowest quality, per can .	4·00	12·00
Canned fish, better quality, per can..	12·00	25·00
Canned fruit, lowest quality, per can	5·00	12·00
Canned fruit, better quality, per can	10·00	25·00
Milk, per half-litre.....	not sold	2·50
Butter, per kilo .....	7·75	40·00
Eggs, for ten .....	not sold	12·00
Tea, per 50 grams .....	not sold	6·00
Sugar, granulated, per kilo .....	2·00	15·00
Laundry soap, per kilo .....	2·00	6·00
Toilet soap, per cake .....	3·70	3·70
Candy, used for tea, per kilo, lowest quality .....	12·00	12·00
Candy, better quality, per kilo .....	40·00	40·00
Canvas shoes, per pair .....	35·00	75·00
Leather shoes, cheapest, pair .....	55·00	150·00
Leather shoes, better grade .....	75·00	350·00
Gingham house dress .....	40·00	60·00
Rubbers .....	25·00	25·00

Note: 1 kilo is equivalent to 2·2 pounds.

\* Prices quoted from the *Moscow Daily News* of December 9, 1934, to take effect on January 1, 1935, with the abolition of the bread-card system.

## CHAPTER XIX

### MY TRIP ON THE VOLGA

IN 1933 news came to Moscow that Hitler was carrying on a campaign to raise relief for the German colonists in the German Volga Republic. The German reports stated that thousands were dying of starvation and that famine conditions prevailed there and in the Ukraine and the North Caucasus. The Soviet Government not only rejected this relief with indignation, but decided to launch a campaign to counteract the stories of widespread suffering which were being broadcast by the Nazis.

Orders were given to factories throughout the Soviet Union, to the party units and trade unions, that the best foreign shock workers were to be selected for an excursion tour to the Volga region, in order to reveal to the world what the true conditions were. I was selected from the ATE and five others were selected from the five other sections of the Elektrozavod. Among others selected there was a German mechanic who had just completed a pamphlet containing an attack upon Hitler.

On September 4th the Moscow group, which included twenty-five or thirty American, German and Czechoslovakian workers and specialists, met at the Anglo-American Club on Gertzina Street. Our suitcases were packed and we were all ready to leave. We were addressed by Tzelman, chairman of the Foreign Bureau of the *VZSPS* (Russian Trade Unions). Tzelman did not explain the real purpose of the trip, but maintained an air of secrecy and reserve. He did explain, however, that as a reward for our good services we would have an opportunity to enjoy a wonderful trip on the Volga, on the

steamer Komsomoletz, which would be waiting for us at Gorky (Nizhniy-Novgorod). Stops at various cities and towns had been arranged. The trip would be enlivened by concerts and entertainments on board the boat. In all, we were promised a wonderful time.

On September 5th we arrived by rail at Gorky. Besides the workers and specialists, there were official representatives of the Communist Party, the Communist International, the trade unions, and the *Moscow Daily News*. There were interpreters, propagandists, secretaries, motion picture photographers, actors and actresses and the Red Front brass band of twenty-four pieces. There were at least seventy-five non-tourists accompanying the expedition.

At the railroad station in Gorky we boarded jitney buses, which were waiting for us to take us to the pier. As we passed the bridge we caught sight of the steamer, brilliantly decorated with red banners and slogans, "Long Live the Soviet Union," "Long Live Stalin," "Down With Hitler," and "Long Live the Foreign Shock Workers."

At the pier and on the boat were gathered the rest of the delegation of two hundred shock workers from all parts of the Soviet Union. The workers were assigned to hard berths with a mattress without springs. The specialists, like me, received soft berths with a mattress and springs. The officials and propagandists were assigned to luxurious private cabins. Many of these had women companions, the secretaries and women propagandists of the expedition. For instance, there was one woman whom I knew, occupied a cabin with a Comintern official. Her husband was in Moscow. Another occupied a cabin with his young secretary. His wife also was in Moscow.

The ship was elaborately equipped for the expedition. There was a complete printing shop on board, which published a four-page paper every day. There were phonographs and radios for concerts and dancing. Motion picture cameras snapped us in various poses, at the table, on deck, and in discussion meetings. A staff of artists made sketches on the way. I was assigned as

official correspondent for the *Rovnost Ludu*, the American-Slovakian Communist daily paper, to write up the trip.

Soon after we got on board, at about noon, we were regaled with a sumptuous meal in the beautiful dining-room of the steamer, which was decorated with flowers for the occasion. The regular dining-room and kitchen staff had been dispensed with. We had cooks selected from the leading Moscow hotels. The waitresses were all spotless and good-looking. They did not lack sweethearts during the trip.

Our usual breakfast consisted of compote, eggs, butter, cheese, salami, the finest white bread and coffee, or tea, with as many helpings as we desired. The midday meal and the evening meal usually consisted of an appetizer (fish), excellent cabbage soup with a generous portion of beef in it, roast chicken, pork, lamb, goose, turkey, or duck; then more fish, white bread, salads, fresh vegetables and fruits in abundance, coffee or tea, and dessert—compote, tarts or ice cream. Wine, vodka, cigars and cigarettes could be purchased at the buffet. The band played German music while we dined. Singing and all kinds of jokes and pranks kept the group in a constant spirit of merriment.

In the evening there were entertainments, concerts, political and technical lectures and discussions. The weather was glorious. During the day most of us took sunbaths on the deck. After dinner we had two hours *mertviy chas* (rest).

After a two-day trip, we arrived at Chevokshary, the capital city of the Chuvashian Republic. This was an agricultural and lumber region. We noticed a swarm of ragged people, men, women and children on the river bank, waiting for the landing of the steamer. But these were driven off by a few militiamen before we docked. We were received by the leading officials of the city and paraded with our brass band to the city square, where there was a rudely built platform and benches.

But as we passed through the squalid streets we could not help noticing the crowds of ragged people, barefoot and in pitiable condition, who followed the parade. There were too few militiamen to keep these wretched hordes completely at a

distance. We could hear their cries, "Why are you chasing us away? We are not bothering anybody. We are only asking for bread." It was the first rude interruption to our joyous excursion.

In the square we were officially greeted by the chairman of the city soviet. He explained how glad the city was to receive the foreign shock workers who were helping to build Socialism. He pointed out that now the region possessed many modern tractors, while under Czarism they had to work with a hand or horse-drawn plough. He mentioned the progress they were making in agricultural production and in education.

"But we still have great difficulties," he said. "There are many shortcomings. But the people of Chevokshary are glad to suffer and endure their hardships with enthusiasm, because they know that heavy industry in which you foreign shock workers are engaged, must be built up first."

A German member of the delegation answered this speech with thanks on behalf of the group, and we departed with much playing of the Internationale.

On the way to the pier we broke ranks and used the opportunity to talk to people on the street, although the boat whistle summoned us to hurry. I walked beside a man and woman, each about forty, barefoot and clad in dirty rags, who were following the delegation to the boat landing.

"*Grajdaniin*, how are things in Chevokshary?" I asked.

The man waved his hand with a despairing gesture and said, "*Plokhoo.*" (Bad.)

"But it can't be any better, we are building Socialism," I remarked, repeating the words of the speaker on the platform.

"*Nie verno*" (it is not true), he protested, shaking his head vigorously. "They promised us things would be better after the first Five Year Plan. And now it is getting worse every year. We can't get a piece of bread."

"How is it that you say you have no bread, and yet I heard that you are breaking all records for the production of wheat and grain?" I asked.

"Yes, that is just the reason, *grajdaniin*," he replied. "They

take everything from us poor peasants and we have nothing left."

When we got on board the boat, where the usual abundant supper was waiting for us, it seemed that a wet blanket had been cast over the joyous party. There were no more jokes and pranks. Here and there, little knots of workers conversed in grave, low voices, especially among the Germans. Even the propagandists seemed depressed by what we had seen, and Tzelman was strangely silent. I really believe that a good many of these officials were themselves not aware of the real conditions outside of Moscow.

After the meal there seemed to be no desire for the usual entertainments. The excursionists broke up into little, earnest groups all over the deck and vigorous arguments ensued everywhere. The Germans said, "That's what Hitler told us. And now we see it is all true."

I listened in at the various groups until suddenly I heard my native Slovakian language. I went up to the speaker and introduced myself. "That's ten we have now," he said, adding my name to the list of Slovaks he was gathering. We found, in all, seventeen Slovaks on the boat. They came from various parts of the Soviet Union, from Tiflis, Ukraine, Siberia, Caucasus, Tashkent and the Urals.

This Slovak had been a member of the Interhelpo Commune at Tashkent. This project had been organized in Czechoslovakia and included Hungarians, Slovaks, Czechs and Poles. They had been induced, by some clever promoters, to sell all their property and belongings in order to start anew in the Soviet Union. The enterprise went to pieces with disastrous results for the members of the group. A number had died. The others scattered to Moscow and other cities. He himself had become a lumberjack in the Urals. He claimed that there was a small remnant left at Tashkent, of the original colony.

When we arrived at Kazan, the capital of the Tartar Republic, Tzelman, the head of the delegation, informed us with an apologetic air that something had gone wrong with the arrangements and that we could not go ashore. Nobody was waiting

for us at the pier. We heard later on that the propagandists, the trade union officials and party members had gone to help with the harvest on a near-by State farm. We were bitterly disappointed at the prospect of not visiting this famous region. We were anxious to visit the university which Lenin had attended here. Coming as it did, after the disillusioning visit to Chevokshary, the situation aroused considerable protest among the excursionists and caused a heated debate in the meeting of the party faction. Finally Tzelman was compelled to give way, and we went ashore.

Near the pier was a large market in which peasants were selling fruit and vegetables. We noticed many people waiting about the stalls for cast-off melon rinds, rotten apples or decayed carrots thrown away by the vendors, which they ate greedily. But the leaders did not let us tarry long here. "We have no time," they said. "We must go on." I tried to talk to one or two of the inhabitants of the city as we passed, but I could not understand the strange Tartar dialect.

We hurried toward the University, passing through narrow, dirty little streets, lined with women and children crying for bread, or a kopek. Conditions seemed to be worse here than in Chevokshary. The shop windows were quite empty, save for some bottles of wine and vodka. When we arrived at the University, it was closed. Evidently there had been no warning or preparation for our coming. We returned to the boat for the next stop at Ulianovsk, Lenin's birthplace.

Our experience at Ulianovsk was about the same. We found that no preparations had been made for our coming. It was only after an assurance that we would stop there on the way back, that we agreed to forgo stopping there now.

Our next stop was Samara, known in Bolshevik history as the headquarters of the Czechoslovakian Legion, which co-operated with the White Guard forces against the Revolution in 1917, and was finally defeated by the Red Army. At the pier there was nobody waiting for us except two young men. I heard them ask if there were any Czechoslovakians among the

We had learned to accept such mysterious disappearances as a matter of course.

As we left the historic headquarters, we ran across a group of young Russian girls. From their dress and general appearance they seemed to be propagandists or secretaries. They were not ordinary working girls. The other members of the group ran off with them, for we had about seven hours in Samara. I remained alone to wander about the city.

As I walked along, I encountered an old woman, almost naked, lying on the street near a wall, with two children beside her. The children were crying weakly. The woman seemed pretty far gone. I tried to speak to her, but she made no answer. I tried to speak to the children, but they wailed faintly, and gave no answer. I put my hand into my pocket to leave a few roubles with them, when I noticed a Red soldier observing me. He could see by my dress that I was a stranger. "Don't give them anything, *grajdanin*," he said, walking up to me. "These people do not want to work. They are *kulaks*. They are enemies of the Soviet Union." I went on my way with a heavy heart.

I noticed a woman of about thirty, modestly dressed, walking some distance ahead of me. I caught up with her. I told her who I was and asked her why there were so many people lying about the streets in such a terrible condition. I asked why the Government did not do anything for them. The words of the Red soldier were still in my ears.

"My dear *grajdanin*," she said, "you haven't seen anything at all. If you really want to see something, take that car and ride to the end of the line. Then walk further for about five minutes. There you will see a sight that you will never forget. There are hundreds of miserable, starving peasants, living in an open field. They come from the provinces where they can find no food. The soldiers keep them away from the city. We, who live in the city, do not have very much ourselves, it is true. For about three weeks we had no bread at all. But what little we have, we share with these unfortunates. I urge you to go, *grajdanin*, to see this awful scene."

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Much as I would have liked to make the trip, I was afraid that I might be completely separated from the group, so I decided to return to the boat. I had already heard the sharp blasts of the whistle and thought I had better hurry along.

As I approached the pier I noticed twenty men digging a ditch in the broiling sun. Near them a woman, fairly dressed, stopped me. She was evidently not from Samara. She asked me for some bread or a kopek. The ditch diggers heard her request.

"Hey, *grajdanka*," they yelled, "where do *you* come from? What do you mean by asking for bread, while we have to work like beasts here and we haven't had a piece of bread in three weeks? [In a period of scarcity the people eat cabbage, potatoes or other food.] If you don't go on your way pretty quickly, we'll come out and teach you a lesson. Off with you, now."

The woman hurried away.

## CHAPTER XX

### FROM SYZRAN TO VOLSKO

ACCORDING to our programme we were to stop next at Syzran, where we were to visit a *kolhoz* (collective farm). But when we neared the town, the banks were lined with the famished population waiting for the boat to dock. Without a word of explanation to us, the ship suddenly changed its course for the middle of the river. There was no stop at Syzran. It was only later that I found out the reason for the change in plans.

Of course, the incident aroused considerable grumbling among the dissatisfied shock workers. I decided to talk the matter over with Tzelman. But Tzelman was not to be found in his office. Instead, I met one of his secretaries, whom I knew well in Moscow, a fine, intelligent comrade. I told him of the discontent caused by the policy followed thus far.

"Why all this bluff?" I asked. "Why is there no stop according to the programme? Why is there no explanation to the people? You can't go on this way."

The secretary looked at me with a dejected air.

"Yes," he said, "Comrade Smith, the trip is a total failure. To tell you the truth, we comrades in Moscow did not realize that things were so bad. Nobody told us. The officials here did not give us any information and they made no arrangements to receive the excursion. This trip will do us a great deal of harm. It might have been better to ignore the Hitler propaganda. At any rate, perhaps we can still make something out of the trip. All is not yet lost."

I urged the advisability of an immediate party fraction meeting. He promised to take up the matter with Tzelman, and I left him.

From time to time I reminded the secretary about the proposed party meeting. But nothing was done about the matter.

"Tzelman has lost his head completely," he told me. "He does not know what to do."

Then he told me in confidence that the leading officials of the expedition were having a private conference that night after supper. He suggested that I drop in to take part.

When I entered Tzelman's office after supper the conference was already in session. There were five men present. They stopped talking as I entered. Tzelman turned to me with annoyance, and said:

"Comrade Smith, I have no time now. You will find me later on the deck. We have some private matters to take up here. You will excuse us."

"I don't know what secrets you have here," I said. "As a party member I have a right to sit in and listen. I don't understand why you have not called one party fraction meeting on the whole trip. Don't you think it hurts me when I hear the general criticism of the officials and of the party, and I can't answer them? This business at Syzran, where you did not stop, and did not even give an explanation to us, is disgraceful. I don't like the whole business."

Tzelman made no answer. But Clarke, director of the foreign bureau of the Workers and Peasants Inspection, who was at the conference, tried to pacify me.

"There is no reason to get excited, Comrade Smith," he said. "We are taking up a private matter here now, and we will consider the question you have raised, later on."

They were evidently trying to get rid of me. I left, slamming the door angrily.

The next day we arrived at Volsko, a shipping centre for the near-by *sovhozi* and *kolhozi* (State and collective farms). We had to dock here to obtain supplies. The arrangements for an official reception and parade were again unsuccessful. The excursionists streamed ashore in an informal manner to look around.

me? There are thousands here like me. Why don't you speak to them?"

A man spoke up in the crowd, another speculator:

"That's right, Masha. You are telling the truth."

The propagandist turned to this individual with an angry gesture shouting:

"*Zakroi rot* (shut up). You are no better than Masha. You had better shut your mouth or you will see what will happen to you at the *kolhoz* meeting."

Another peasant woman thrust herself forward in the crowd. She carried a child on one arm and clutched another by the hand. She rushed up to the harassed propagandist crying:

"Why don't you work yourself? Why is it you have nothing to do but force us to work. You have fine clothes and plenty of food. We don't get anything. Here, take my baby!" She pushed her emaciated babe toward the man, "You take care of my baby and I will go to work."

But the propagandist pushed the infant aside angrily, saying:

"I don't want your brat. You shut up. I am not talking to you."

I walked up to a middle-aged woman on the fringe of the crowd. I explained to her that we were excursionists from Germany, America and Czechoslovakia and that we would like to know what is going on here. She told us the cause of the tumult.

"We have to work like slaves and they take all the products from us. We have nothing. In the *stolovaya* (restaurant) they give us a mash cooked out of rotten tomatoes and water-melons, which is not fit for pigs, and nothing else. No bread, no meat. How can we live on that? So the people run away. They do not want to work. Last year many died. It is no better this year."

A Slovak in our group interrupted, "But *grajdanka*, it is harvest time now. If you work you will surely receive enough to eat."

She replied heatedly, "We believed their promises once before and we got nothing. We won't believe them again. They take everything and give us nothing."

I asked her where the many ragged children came from.

"Some are *besprizornyy* (waifs)," she said. "Some have parents on the *kolhozi*. The children live in the abandoned old wooden shanties in the village. At night they come down to the *kolhoz* to steal. Then they sell their loot in the market."

At this point we heard the dinner-bell on board the boat. We hastened aboard. The excursionists were everywhere in excited groups exchanging their experiences. They believed the words of the people with whom they had spoken on shore. They took no stock in what the propagandists had told them. As soon as one of the leaders or propagandists approached, everyone shut up like a clam.

After dinner I made up my mind to nail Tzelman. I watched him. As soon as he was through at the table I was after him. I button-holed him in the corridor.

"Comrade Tzelman," I said, "how do you account for the many hungry children I found in the market of Volsko?"

"Those are *kulak* children," he replied, with contempt.

"And are all those beggars and starving people down there, also *kulaks*?" I insisted.

He could see that I did not believe a word he said, so he simply pushed me aside and rushed away. I did not see any of these officials or propagandists on shore. They were too busy with conferences on board the boat, while we were out investigating.

I was determined to follow this matter through. I went ashore again after dinner and approached the first beggar in the market-place. He looked like an old man, worn and haggard, but appearances among these people are very deceptive. Their long hair and beard and their general condition make them all seem old.

"From where are you, *dyadya*?" I asked him as he held his cap appealingly.

"Why, I am from right here in Volsko," he replied.

"What is your trade? What did you do?"

"I was a *botrok* (farm hand) for a rich peasant who lived here," said the old man.

"And are you not a *kulak*?" I asked. "And what about

those others who are begging throughout the city—are they not *kulaks*?"

"No, no," he replied. "The *kulaks* were all shot a long time ago. No *kulaks* live here now. You see those houses on the hill? That is where the *kulaks* used to live. The Gay Payoo officials and party leaders live there now."

I dropped a few roubles into his cap and he thanked me profusely as I passed on.

I had not gone very far when I encountered a large group of men and women peasants speculating in the market, and these people were gathered in earnest conversation with seven of our fellow-excursionists—four Czechs and three Germans. The lumber-jack from the Urals had the floor.

"Why don't you fellows go to work?" he was saying. "It's better than hanging around here."

An old man with a long tangled beard and bare feet took it upon himself to make reply:

"It's easy for you to talk, *grajdalin*. You have a full stomach. But it is not so easy for us. For us it makes no difference whether we work or not, we get no bread anyway. Listen, *grajdalin*, we will make you an offer. If you will come and work with us, we will work with you. If you will be satisfied, then we will be satisfied too. But on one condition only. You must not ask for more than we get. You must work for the same amount of food, under the same conditions. If you are willing to stand it, then we will be willing also. What do you say? What do you say, *grajdalin*?" he asked, as he turned to his fellow-peasants.

There were shouts from the crowd, "*Pravilno! pravilno!* (That's right! that's right!) It's a bargain." They turned eagerly to the Czech for his reply to the offer, but he was stumped. He could only shrug his shoulders helplessly, while the peasants laughed in scorn.

On board the boat, we guyed the lumber-jack on his silence and asked him why he had not replied.

"How could I answer them?" he asked. "There is no answer to a stomach question, you know."

## CHAPTER XXI

### WE VISIT SARATOV

GREAT promises had been held out to us about our visit to Saratov, where there was a huge agricultural combine factory. In our honour, there was to be a big programme of banquets and theatre parties sponsored by the factory committee. But again, the arrangements failed to materialize. There was no committee waiting for us at the pier, just some straggling beggars.

After breakfast we all rushed to the city to see the sights. There was no attempt to deter us or to instruct us in any way. Groups of excursionists scattered about the town. I went off alone, away from the main streets, and down the narrow side streets where the people lived. There were the usual groups of women and children lying on the streets, begging—scenes to which I had long since become accustomed.

After a few minutes' walk I reached some sort of a market. A crowd was gathered near an old deserted wooden house, and apparently gazing at something on the cobbled street. The crowd was passive. There was no excitement or other indication of anything unusual.

I made my way into the crowd to see the object of their curiosity. A woman, with three children beside her—one boy and two girls—was lying on the bare cobblestones. They were all dead. Someone had thrown a dirty rag over each of them to cover their nakedness.

The woman seemed to be about thirty-five, the children about four, six, and nine respectively. The bodies were bloody and in places there were chunks of flesh torn away. Swarms of flies buzzed greedily about the carcasses. My stomach turned in disgust. I had never seen such a sight before.

## I WAS A SOVIET WORKER

Frantically, I approached one after another in the apathetic crowd. "Where did they come from? How did they die?" But nobody answered me. All they said was, "Nie znayu" (I don't know).

Here and there I heard a murmur, "Kak jalko!" (What a pity!) That was all. It looked as if the bodies had been flung out of the near-by courtyard, which was littered with all kinds of rubbish and junk.

I had seen enough of Saratov. I rushed back to the boat, not looking where I was going. I was furious. I made up my mind then that I would denounce the whole expedition regardless of what happened to me.

When I got aboard, I looked for Tzelman. I found him in the sitting-room in consultation with Clarke, Scheberg, his secretary, and a correspondent from the *Moscow Daily News*. None of these officials had made any effort to go ashore into the town. I burst into the conference and interrupted their discussion with scant regard for politeness.

"What are you trying to do here?" I exploded. "Fine counter-propaganda against Hitler you are giving us here! I tell you, comrades, I have just seen a picture such as I have never seen before. I want you to come with me, Comrade Tzelman. I want to show you what is going on. Aren't you ashamed to take us here to a starving country? You yourself don't know what is going on."

"You film us over and over again. Why don't you take pictures there in the city, where the dead people are lying about on the street. That is why you did not let us take any cameras. Now I understand! You were afraid we would take pictures for ourselves!"

I spoke recklessly. I felt that I did not care if I was shot on the spot. I had to speak out, no matter what the consequences.

Tzelman was dumbfounded. He yelled at me:

"That's enough now! You shut up! Remember, you are a Communist. Can't you speak better than that? You should have more sense. You are just looking for trouble, just

trying to dig up dirt. That's the trouble with you!" He dashed from the room, shouting over his shoulder:

"You will be sorry for this!"

I tried to explain my story to the others, but they all followed Tzelman out of the door. I returned to my room in a reflective mood. What did Tzelman mean when he said, "You will be sorry for this?" Would they make trouble for me? I recalled to mind a friend of mine, a Hungarian revolutionist who had mysteriously disappeared after expressing dissatisfaction with conditions. Would the Gay Payoo get after me? Might they not injure my wife in some way? These were the thoughts which went through my mind. I regretted somewhat my hasty words to Tzelman, but the deed was done, so I resolved to await the consequences.

Not half the excursionists reported for dinner that day. They drifted back later in small groups, silent and serious. I kept my thoughts to myself. Scheberg, Tzelman's secretary, announced the following instruction that afternoon, "You are not to go away any more by yourselves. We are all going together to the factory." Evidently the managing committee felt that things were properly prepared at the factory to counteract the miserable impression made upon us all by conditions in the city.

A special car was allotted to us by arrangement with the Trolley Trust, and we rode to the factory. It was the cleanest and most efficient-looking plant we saw on the entire trip. There was a little park in the centre of the plant site. The machines were well-kept and properly placed with plenty of working space between them. Each worker had his own clothes closet near his bench. In general, it seemed to me to be one of the best organized plants in the Soviet Union.

Despite earlier warnings, we took advantage of the first opportunity to break up into groups in order to wander about the factory freely, and talk to the workers. I found myself in the company of the lumber-jack from the Urals and a Bohemian worker from Moscow.

We approached a young girl of about nineteen who was filing some machine parts at a bench. She wore a red cloth on her head, a jacket of soiled blue denim, a soiled short skirt and slippers. Although she flushed in embarrassment when we first began to talk to her, she answered our questions readily.

She was the daughter of a poor peasant on a nearby *kolhoz*. She earned from fifty to seventy roubles a month on a piece-work basis on her present job. She lived with her sister on the *kolhoz*, or sometimes she slept in town with friends.

"How do you find things?" we asked. "Do you make enough to get along? Can you buy all that you need?"

"No, *tovarish*, it is not enough. But what's the use? There is nothing to buy anyway. All we get in the restaurant is *sirky* (a square of pot-cheese), two bites for forty kopeks. We can't get any bread!"

"Don't you have your *norma* entitling you to a certain amount of bread, meat, butter and other things?"

"Yes, we have a card each, but we cannot get what the card calls for. In our stores there is nothing to buy. When there is bread, we do not get enough to make up for the days on which we received none. We get enough for that day only. As far as the goods in the Government stores are concerned, we can never touch them. The prices are too high."

"Do you think conditions were better before, in the old days?"

"I am not old enough to remember. But my parents tell me that, although they did not live in luxury then, they had enough bread and nobody starved."

"Do you belong to the Komsomols?"

"Of course I belong to the Komsomols. They bother us so long that we all have to join."

"But as a Komsomol you should be loyal to the Government! Don't you think that things will get better after a while?"

"We have given up hope a long time ago. And remember, *tovarish*, most Komsomols believe as I do, although they may not say so."

She explained that membership in the Komsomols was really obligatory for most young people. Thus the Soviet Government gained an additional hold on the younger generation. Membership in this organization did not carry with it any additional privileges, except for a few leaders or favoured officials. Thus the administration introduced its methods of official corruption and favouritism among the youth, and thereby trained for itself new recruits for admission into the ranks of the bureaucracy.

Although Komsomol membership was considered a prerequisite for party membership, yet it did not carry with it any insurance of later admission into the privileged ranks of the Communist Party. It simply meant that the youth was thus stimulated to greater effort, to speed up and to work harder.

Nearby was another worker of about fifty listening attentively to the conversation. Occasionally he glanced at us with a knowing smile, as if to say he could tell us a thing or two himself. We entered into conversation with him, introducing ourselves and explaining our mission.

"I am an old-timer in the movement," he explained. "I was a partisan and fought rifle in hand against the Czechoslovakian Legion."

Although there were few workers about, most of them having been sent to the *kolhozi* to help with the harvest, he looked about cautiously as he spoke to us.

"Did you hear what this young comrade says?" we asked. "Isn't it too bad that the younger generation should be brought up so dissatisfied? What do you think of her opinion?"

"Everything she said was true," he rejoined.

"But, are you not entitled to certain privileges and pensions as a partisan?"

"The only privilege I get is that I do not have to wait on the food-line when I show my card. That is all. But there are plenty of others who never shouldered a rifle who are now called the real partisans and enjoy all kinds of privileges. The ordinary worker-partisans get nothing."

"How many combines do you produce in the factory?" I asked.

"From eighteen to twenty a day. That is our record in the papers. But what good is that, when the combines break down in a short time and come piling back to the factory for overhauling in a few months? We spend more time overhauling and repairing inefficient machines than it would take to make new ones. Almost half of our people are now out on the farms trying to keep the combines working. There you have some of the machines which have been returned to the factory." And he pointed to a group of combines on a conveyor track near him. Some of them looked as if they had never been used at all.

"How is it that you have so many machines that do not work properly?"

He explained the reasons. His description was almost a complete replica of conditions in the Elektrozavod—the sacrifice of quality for quantity, the wastage and neglect of materials and machines, a continuous effort to cut the cost of production, at the expense of the workers, and the same incompetent gang of propagandizing parasites enjoying special privileges with which I was so well acquainted in Moscow.

He invited me to visit his home in the evening. "I should like to have you meet a friend of mine, a countryman of yours," he said.

That evening I went to his home, on the outskirts of the city. As we entered his modest room, a man of about forty-five rose to greet us. I found that he was a Hungarian who had been captured by the Russian Army during the World War. After the cessation of hostilities he had decided to remain. So the old man explained briefly.

But there was something strange about the Hungarian. His hair was prematurely streaked with grey. He was extremely nervous. His face was deeply lined, like that of a man who has suffered deeply, and who has gone through some harrowing experience.

He asked me how I liked conditions in Russia. I told him

that I was an American party member, who had come to the Soviet Union with high hopes and great enthusiasm. I told him of some of my experiences and my deep discouragement. It seemed that I struck a responsive chord in the man, for he suddenly grasped my arm and said:

"Comrade, you have seen and experienced much. But yet you cannot have more than the faintest conception of the misery of our unhappy people. As for me I have been through hell itself, here." His hands and face twitched nervously as he spoke. "You are a party member. They have not succeeded in corrupting you, it seems. I believe that you are a man whom I can trust. I will tell you my story.

"At the end of the great war, I was left in Russia, a prisoner. For some time I worked on the land among the peasantry. When the White Guards opened their attack upon the Soviet Union, I joined the Red Army and fought in several campaigns against Kolchak, until his forces were finally defeated.

"Then I married a Russian girl and I have two children, two girls. Because of my military experience I was enlisted by the Gay Payoo, and was attached to the prison at P—. I was a member of the execution squad, whose work it was to shoot down those condemned as White Guards and counter-revolutionists.

"One day they brought into the prison courtyard twenty-five peasants condemned as '*kulaks*' and enemies of the Soviet Union. I recognized one among them as a peasant for whom I had worked, who had been very kind to me. I spoke to a close friend of mine among the Gay Payoo men, and to the commandant, with whom I was also intimate. I begged them to help me save this man. I was sure that he was innocent and incapable of doing harm to anyone. I managed to have him scheduled to be the last to face the firing squad.

"In the meantime, through the efforts of my friend and the commandant, we enabled him to escape. We shot the other twenty-four. Unfortunately, a physician who was sent to examine the bodies discovered that there were only twenty-four. His records called for twenty-five. An investigation

was instituted. The commandant disappeared. I was closely questioned and sent to a cell for a week, during the investigation. But I managed to convince the investigators that I knew nothing of the entire affair, and I was put back at my post.

"For five years I had been acting as an executioner of human beings. For five years I had been shooting down innocent people, who, in their effort to get a little bread, had incurred the displeasure of the ruling bureaucracy. I could go on no longer.

"One day I handed in my uniform and rifle and said I was through. The officials refused to hear of such a thing as a resignation. But I was very sick. For two months I was confined in the hospital with a nervous breakdown. When I left the hospital I was given a job as a tinsmith in the Gay Payoo factory, at fifty roubles a month. Finally, I managed to escape to the city of T—, where I got a job as a machinist's helper at seventy-five roubles a month. My wife is sick. At night I collect old pots and pans wherever I can, and repair them. But it is very hard to get along."

"Are you still a party member?" I asked. "You don't seem to agree with the party policies."

"Yes, I am a party member," he said. "If I left the party I might as well shoot myself, for that would be an open sign that I disagree with the party, and what would happen to me then? My only hope is to get a Hungarian passport and get back to my native land. It is very hard to get the necessary credentials from the Foreign Bureau. But I shall succeed and be a free man again."

After I left the home of the old man, I returned to the factory. I was anxious to know if there were any other foreign workers in the plant and at last I succeeded in locating two men working in the repair shop, one a Pole from Detroit, and the other a Russian from Milwaukee. They complained bitterly to me.

"Why don't you go back to the United States, if you don't like it here?" I asked.

They explained to me the method by which they were confined within the borders of the Soviet Union against their wishes. The Russian was not an American citizen, although his family was in the United States. He had hoped to bring them to Russia as soon as he was settled. That was six years ago. But he had neither the money to bring them, nor was he anxious to have them participate in his misery. He could not go back to America because he was a Russian citizen and the Government would not let him go.

The Pole had been trying for two years to renew his re-entry permit, but he could not get the money to go to Riga, nor the necessary amount of foreign money he needed there.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE GERMAN COLONY AT DOBRINKA

ONE of the chief objectives of our trip was the German agricultural colony at Dobrinka. It was here we were to find the answer to Hitler's slanderous attacks upon the Soviet Union.

We arrived one bright morning in September. Again Tzelman's arrangements seemed to have broken down. There was no committee to meet us, so we strolled ashore into the village.

The streets were laid out systematically in straight lines, some being numbered and some named. There was Karl Marx Street and Friedrich Engels Street and others named after revolutionary leaders. The houses were neat and well-constructed, each with its little garden, but the gardens were neglected and overgrown with weeds.

We were astonished to find that the village was uninhabited, save for a chance goat or a chicken which we encountered. After walking some distance we met two women, who for some reason or other were weeping as they passed us. We noticed what seemed to be a stretch of level ground on a height near the outskirts of the village. We climbed to the top to investigate.

The level piece of ground we found was a cemetery. There was a group of about 150 men and women, dressed poorly but neatly. They were scattered about in small groups. Some were digging fresh graves. Some were covering the freshly made graves with sod. Some were chanting funeral dirges in German and others were on their knees praying fervently. The entire field was covered with comparatively newly made graves.

We approached the group in awed silence. But the mourners

soon caught sight of us and formed a tearful circle around us. A young German miner from the Don Basin acted as our spokesman. He was a two-faced rascal, who was continuously railing against Stalin in private conversation and delivering eloquent eulogies in public speeches wherever we stopped. He explained to them who we were and what our mission was. I kept close to my Czechoslovakian comrades, many of whom understood German and translated for me. The German miner wanted to know what was going on here and why the village was deserted.

A middle-aged German farmer explained:

"We do not live in the village any more. We live at the barracks on the *sovhozi* and the *kolhozi*. The village is too far for us to return to at night, since we work from early in the morning until very late."

"Why are there so many dead people here?" asked the miner.

"We have no bread. We are honest, hard-working people. We have good land here. Even in the great famine of 1921 and 1922 we did not starve. We worked hard and gave everything possible to the Government. We hid nothing, as did those on other farms. Then they collectivized everything."

"What did we get out of it? Everything we produced was taken from us, even the cattle. We have no fertilizer. When we produced in greater abundance, they raised the quota and left us nothing. The only food we get is some green vegetables, *arbuz* [honeydew melon] and other fruit, no bread, no milk, no butter, no fats. Our people have become sick with stomach typhus, and that is why so many have died."

"Do you mean to tell us that you have not tried to do something about this terrible situation?" we asked.

"In 1929, a number of families left for Canada and Germany," the German farmer replied. "But we stayed on in the hope that conditions would improve and that things would be better for those who remained."

"Why don't you complain to the Government?"

"We have asked the Government for help many times. We wanted to go out and follow our comrades who left in 1929.

It was no use. Then we sent appeals to Germany, and what happened? Those who wrote the letters were shot. Even those who were suspected of having something to do with the letters were shot down. That was three or four months ago. What can we do now? It would be better if they killed us all, and be done with it!"

The excursionists made few comments before the colonists. It was not safe to speak before strangers. They waited until they got on board the steamer. After looking around carefully to see if any of the propagandists were about, one German machinist declared:

"I suspected things were not going so well, from what I had heard, but I never expected this. I am through with the Soviet Union. Nobody can deceive me any more. I am going back to Germany as soon as I can."

Another, a technician, spoke up:

"Everything Hitler said was true."

The others, less talkative, nodded in silent approval of the sentiments expressed. I too kept my own counsel. The luxurious meals had lost their flavour for us after what we had seen at Dobrinka, and attendance in the dining hall became somewhat irregular. We preferred to spend the time within our cabins discussing our experiences with those whom we could trust fully.

I had struck up a friendship with one of the officials on the boat. He was not a bad fellow, but due to his official position, he could not speak out. He depended upon me for information and even urged me to protest, since I was in a sheltered position as a foreign worker with an American passport. I explained to him what we had seen and what the German workers were saying. Then I said:

"I can't understand how the officials in Moscow came to organize this trip. Didn't they know about conditions in the Middle Volga before they sent us here?"

I knew, for instance, that among the propagandists on board the boat from the beginning of the trip, was a German, officially representing the Middle Volga in the Central Soviet. I heard

some time later that this man was afterwards arrested and held responsible for the failure of the excursion. I could not understand it all.

My friend was very thoughtful after my remarks and my final questions. He said:

"No, comrade, I assure you, we had no idea of conditions here. The reports we received were not like this. If we had known the true state of affairs, we would never have organized this trip. You see, the local officials and representatives fear that if they send in true reports of conditions, their own heads will fall; so they send in such reports as will keep them in favour with the higher-ups in Moscow."

We left Dobrinka in the afternoon for the next stop at Kamichin. On the way, our boat, which was quite fast, caught up with another slower excursion boat laden with militiamen (policemen) going on a vacation to Astrakhan. Suddenly we noticed that one of our rowboats was being launched. Tzelman entered the rowboat with another official, and they rowed toward the other steamer. "Now they will cook up another humbug for us," I thought to myself.

Soon the two steamers came alongside each other and Tzelman stepped to our deck. Within a few minutes the militia band struck up the Internationale, and our German Red Front Band responded. The excursionists crowded to the deck to watch and listen. After the music had subsided, a spokesman on the other boat introduced the militia captain and asked him to make a few remarks. He was neatly dressed in a new khaki uniform and a blue summer cap.

"*Tovarshi*," he began, "we militiamen are happy and proud to greet you foreign specialists, you *udarniks*, who are giving your best efforts to help the Soviet Union build up socialism. It is with pleasure that we, the *udarniks* among the militiamen, greet the cream of our foreign workers in the Soviet Union."

He was the most eloquent police official I have ever heard, and he laid on the soft soap generously.

"We know that there are many serious shortcomings in the Middle Volga," he continued. "These shortcomings are not

secrets to us. We have written about them, and we have discussed them frankly. We are not ashamed of them. They are due to the backwardness of the people."

Thus the Russian people not only suffered the bitter consequences of the criminal incompetence of the Stalin régime but were shouldered with the responsibility for their own misery. That was passing the buck with a vengeance.

"Nevertheless, we are making progress every day," the orator declared. "Conditions are improving. To-day we have more tractors, more schools and bigger harvests than ever. In fact, we are facing real prosperity while the capitalist countries are starving.

"And comrades, I hope you will come back to the Middle Volga a couple of years from now; then, you will see the great progress here. You will find everything changed.

"We are confident that you foreign specialists, you *udarniks*, will be much better *udarniks* after your trip here and that when you get back you will work with renewed energy and enthusiasm for the success of the Five Year Plan, and the building of socialism. Let us work together untiringly and devotedly, not only for the success of the revolution here, but also for the success of the revolution in your own native country and the establishment of Soviet Republics throughout the world."

Amid prolonged cheers both bands played the Internationale. We made no comments, for the propagandists were mingled among us and we had to be careful.

Then Tzelman stepped forward and introduced the spokesman for our group. It was no other than the German miner from the Don Basin. He surprised us all by the fire of his utterances. It was one long string of "Long Live!" declarations for Stalin, for Voroshilov, for the Five Year Plan, for socialism, for the International World Revolution, and another long string of "Down With!" declarations for Hitler, the Fascists, the capitalists and all the enemies of the Soviet Union.

The German excursionists could stand it no longer. Some walked up and down the deck with agitated steps. Some swore the strongest German oaths in their vocabulary. Others left the

deck in utter disgust. A number of Czechoslovakian workers followed them. I remained until the end of the performance. I could well understand the conduct of the German miner. What is the difference? he must have thought. Why not keep up the damn comedy, as long as I save my own skin? I knew that he did not believe a word he was saying, and that in his next private conversation among his compatriots he would curse Stalin again in the strongest terms.

We were not allowed ashore at Kamichin, but proceeded on our journey.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### FROM STALINGRAD TO ASTRAKHAN

ON the following day we arrived at Stalingrad. We were to visit the famous tractor plant of which I had heard so much. There was no reception committee at the pier waiting for us.

The day was a gloomy one and it rained heavily. For some reason or other there was no trolley available to take us to the factory. The ship had to make a forty-minute sail around an island in order to bring us closer to the plant. Finally we went ashore, donning raincoats and rubbers, those of us who were fortunate enough to have them. Everybody was included in the party this time, every propagandist and secretary, every party worker and official. Only the cook and the crew remained on board. It was to be a big show.

We arrived at the factory gates after a twenty minutes walk over the muddy roads in a pouring rain. It was about one-thirty. We expected a big banquet in our honour. We waited in the downpour while Tzelman and his committee rushed to the telephone to make arrangements for our visit. It was clear that the administration was not prepared for our coming.

Tzelman and his assistants rushed hither and thither frantically; to the party secretary, to the trade union secretary, to the factory director. The factory director and his assistant could not be found. Since he was the responsible head of the plant, we could not enter without his permission. Our officials swore furiously.

We were all very hungry, for it was long past the regular lunch hour. We decided to try the foreign workers' restaurant at the factory, but they had very little food left excepting some cold potato and vegetable salad and some beer.

Our band played a few cheerless tunes in front of the restaurant, but it attracted no one except a few ragged, drenched children. We wandered through the rain along a near-by boulevard, but it was far from enjoyable because of the deep puddles and prevailing mud. On the way we met a worker, who asked whether there were any Hungarians in our group. He was referred to me, and we walked off together for a chat and a bottle of beer at the restaurant.

My acquaintance was a political refugee from Hungary, a man who had been very active in the Hungarian Revolution. He had been exchanged by the Horthy government for Hungarian prisoners then confined in Russia. At present he was working in a near-by factory making packing cases. At first he hesitated to speak about conditions, but when he heard me tell of my experiences on the trip down the Volga, he opened up and spoke freely. He had travelled extensively through the cities I had visited and he agreed with my opinion about conditions there.

"And this is the workers' country which we were dreaming about!" he remarked bitterly. "What have we built up here? Not socialism, but bureaucratism! All the Hungarian political prisoners are disgusted. Many had escaped to brave the terrors of the Horthy government, rather than remain here."

"Those of us who are left are counting the days when we can follow them. You are fortunate that you can get out of here. With all my heart I urge upon you, comrade, to tell the truth when you get back to the United States. Those men whom we believed in and followed in the Hungarian Revolution, men like Bela Kun, have betrayed us here and are working hand-in-hand with the Soviet bureaucracy against the Russian people. I know personally of many Hungarian refugees who protested against conditions, who had been turned over to the Gay Payoo by Bela Kun, and have been shot. That is the kind of corruption and treachery we have here."

As we were about to part, he pleaded that I send him some dry bread, cooking oil and perhaps some cloth, when I got back

to Moscow. He promised to send more than the equivalent to me in dried fruits and vegetables.

"I have a large family, you know, and it is very difficult to get along on what they give us here," he said, as he warmly shook my hand.

We had been waiting around for four hours without success. Tzelman and his committee finally secured a street car for us and we returned to the boat. Tzelman promised us, however, that we would return on our way back and that we would be well received at that time.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### ASTRAKHAN, RUSSIA'S FISHING CENTRE

ONE night after leaving Stalingrad we arrived at Astrakhan, Russia's chief fishing port, located on the Caspian Sea. The captain of the ship explained to us that the fish were so plentiful there that often the vessel could make no progress, but had to wait for them to swim past.

At the shore we noticed a machine which looked like a steam shovel, which was hauling the fish directly from the water and dumping them into a boat. A long wooden platform stretched for a considerable distance along the shore, and this structure was covered with great piles of fish decaying in the hot sun. The odour was appalling.

As we tried to dock, I noticed that swarms of fish were being washed against the sides of the ship and the pier. The workers on fishing vessels in the harbour were chopping up fish with knives and axes and cooking them over their oil stoves. I have never seen fish in such abundance anywhere.

We entered the Fish *Combinat* or factory, where we were greeted by a delegation of officials, propagandists, and members of the factory committee. We went through the various departments where the fish were being cleaned, sliced, cooked and canned with the aid of modern Italian machinery. The great majority of the workers were women, clad only in a shirt, a short skirt and barefoot. They looked plump and well-fed, but very dirty. I asked one of them, "Don't you get any soap?"

"I know why you ask, *grajdalin*," she replied. "If we got any soap, you can be sure we would look cleaner."

"How is the food?" I asked. "You look as if you got plenty to eat."

"They give us fish to eat, but it is always what is left over. It is not fresh. What they serve in our restaurant is not kept on ice and it is covered with flies and insects. And besides, we don't get enough bread. We eat fish instead of bread. But one can't eat fish all the time."

These workers received from 40 to 120 roubles a month. The brigadiers and straw bosses received from 200 to 400 roubles a month.

There were many Persian and Tartar workers in the city. They were as dark as gypsies but much more ragged and filthy. They were known as "*cherno rabotchy*" (unskilled workers). They were used for the heaviest unskilled work, like pushing around the carts loaded with fish. I stopped a group of four pushing one of these carts and asked them what pay they got. They told me they received 45 roubles a month.

When we left the factory there was a meeting in the courtyard with the usual speeches. When one of our people asked the chairman of the meeting what is the usual wage of the workers in this plant, he answered, "Nobody gets less than 150 roubles a month." From my talks with the workers I knew he was not telling the truth. His answer incensed me so much that I left the meeting.

After the meeting was over Tzelman met me on the street. He asked my why I had run away. I replied gruffly:

"I could not stand there and listen to the lies which the chairman was telling. Why did he say the workers are getting 150 roubles, when that is not true? Ask any worker here and convince yourself."

He looked at me blackly and said, "What are you doing, acting as a spy?" And he walked off.

After dinner on board the boat we went back to the city. I wandered about the beautiful parks and boulevards, looking around with curiosity. I noticed a ragged-looking man watching me for a few moments. Then he approached me timidly. He wore an old pair of shoes from which his toes protruded

but no stockings. He was haggard and unkempt. His trousers were torn and much too short for him, and his naked knees showed underneath.

"What are you looking for?" he asked.

I explained who I was. After some exchange of words I discovered that he was a Hungarian Communist and a political refugee who had fled to the Soviet Union after the fall of the Hungarian Revolution. He had married a Russian girl who had died of hunger in 1931. He had sent his two children to her sister-in-law who lived on a farm near Stalingrad. They had all died last year. "Now it is my turn," he said gloomily.

I could not understand why he did not have a job like the others. He explained:

"I was not satisfied with conditions. I protested again and again and asked to be sent back to Hungary. Then I was fired from my job. They told me that they don't need a counter-revolutionist. I have been forced to live by begging, stealing a little fish, and selling it in the market."

"But there seems to be plenty of fish in Astrakhan," I insisted. "You ought to have enough to live on."

"I see, *tovarish*, that you are not acquainted with the system here. The fish belong to the Soviet Government. Anyone who is caught catching fish or even picking up the fish cast ashore, is violating the law. He is liable to be shot or to be sent to the penitentiary for ten years. Of course, I take a chance and catch fish secretly, which I sell in the market. What else can I do?"

"How about the rest of the Hungarians?" I asked.

"Most of them want to get out, just as I do. For instance, there was a Hungarian in the city not long ago, one of the most active propagandists and, of course, a loyal supporter of the administration. One day he was captured on board a ship bound for Persia. They found on him a number of photographs of the scenes showing conditions in the *kohiz* and the *sovhozi*, pictures of farms operating with Gay Payoo prison labour. He was brought back and shot to death."

I invited my acquaintance to visit me on board the ship, so that I might give him some food. I left him, to look about the city a little longer.

I had walked but one street further when I was accosted by a well-dressed, clean-shaven individual, with a white shirt and neck-tie, dark knickers and a dark, well-fitting coat, a cap and shiny black shoes and leggings. He was well-built and about middle-aged. I noticed later that he had a revolver in a holster under his coat. No worker could afford to dress in this way. In a few minutes I sized him up as a member of the Mur, or civil police.

"*Zdravstvuyte,*" he said cordially to me, "do you know who that man is with whom you were talking for such a long time?"

Evidently he had been watching us. "Not particularly," I replied cautiously. "I just met him on the street."

I explained that I was an American technician, a member of the group investigating conditions on the Volga. But he refused to be satisfied with this explanation. He wanted to know how I knew Russian so well. Was I not a resident of the city? He would not be put off in his cross-examination until I had shown him my party book, my trade union book and all my *legitimacia* (identification papers). Apparently satisfied, he squeezed my hand, explained that he too was a party member, and invited me to sit down with him in the near-by park.

We sat down on a park bench and he drew from his pocket a package of Troika cigarettes, the best obtainable, and offered me one. He would not smoke my cheap Moskva cigarettes. Then he told me what a dangerous man I had been talking to, that the Hungarian was a notorious enemy of the Soviet Union, that he did not want to work and that he preferred to steal and beg. He asked me what the Hungarian had told me and I replied:

"When I told him I was a party member he seemed to be afraid to talk to me. He did not tell me anything." I was not going to be an informer against the poor devil if I could help it.

My new acquaintance warned me that we must fight against

such elements as enemies of the Soviet fatherland. To my great embarrassment he declared, as we were about to part, that he was coming to visit me *that evening* on board the boat. Here was a pretty kettle of fish, the Hungarian and the Gay Payoo man both coming to visit me at the same time.

I hurried off to the boat, rushed to the buffet, ordered some sandwiches and cookies and immediately went off to the city without waiting for my expected visitors. I was alone in a strange city, and I was anxious to find some sort of amusement. I entered a little restaurant. Some Persian dancers in brilliant Oriental costumes were performing on the stage. Later there were acrobats and sword swallowers, and occasionally a Russian or Oriental musical number.

I sat down at a table amid the crowd of well-dressed officials and, because of my appearance as a foreigner, I attracted immediate attention. I felt quite nervous and uncomfortable. I noticed that others were eating crabs, beer or wine, and corn-meal cake. I ordered a large crab, beer and cake, which cost me altogether nine roubles. The crab was served without a knife or fork, the others manipulating the dainty with their fingers. I tried to do the same, but failed miserably. I pried out only a little of the meat, the flavour of which I did not relish very much. I watched the performance on the stage for a while, and then decided to go elsewhere.

A short distance away was another establishment. From the outside, the music sounded like a well-trained orchestra. There was a tall muscular doorman outside in a blue uniform. It looked like one of the ritzy night-clubs I had seen in New York City. Ladies in rich evening gowns, escorted by officers in uniform, Red Army and Gay Payoo men and important-looking officials, were passing in and out. I heard the sounds of merrymaking inside. I thought I would go in to investigate. I walked down the three or four steps to the entrance, when the doorman stopped me and said, "*Propusk, grajdjanin.*" (Pass, citizen.) I told him I had none.

"Well, you can't go in here," he said gruffly. "This is a *closed place.*"

"That's something new to me," I muttered, and walked on. My next stop was at a restaurant which seemed to be open to the public. It was less aristocratic in appearance, the music being furnished by an accordion which was playing the "Yablochko" (Little Apple), a popular Russian dance. There was a mixed crowd of men and women in inexpensive attire. I looked around for a seat, but there were no empty tables. So I sat down opposite two young ladies, one a blonde and the other a brunette. They were painted and rouged and lipsticked in brilliant hues, but their dresses were not expensive.

The blonde opened up the conversation boldly:

"What's the matter, *grajdanin*? Don't you know how to talk?"

I explained apologetically that I was a foreigner from America. I invited them to order something and they each had a glass of wine, some candy and a piece of corn-meal cake. I had a glass of beer and some pears. The bill was thirty-five roubles. I began to feel somewhat uneasy. I had only fifteen roubles left in my pocket. The rest of my money was with the cashier on board the boat. If the girls ordered any more refreshments, I might not be able to cover the bill. I began to look at my watch.

"What's your hurry?" they asked.

I explained that I was one of the Volga excursionists and that I had to return for a meeting.

"*Yesss*, we will walk with you to the boat," volunteered

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"one of the excursionists!" exclaimed the  
shed the street. "I remember you now. Your  
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My new acquaintance the factory by day and then in the

evening we work on the street," the blonde replied without embarrassment. "That is the style in the Soviet Union."

"Are you married?" I asked.

The blonde again replied:

"Why, of course I am married. I have two children. My friend here is also married. She has one child."

"Do you live with your husbands? Do they know that you are doing this? Do they permit this?"

"They not only permit us to do what we are doing, but we are compelled to do it, even if we are tired and worn-out after a day's work at the factory. Otherwise, how can we live?" the blonde continued. "I make sixty roubles a month, and my husband makes eighty roubles. That is not even enough for decent meals for us, not to speak of the children, clothing, shoes, taxes and expenses of all kinds."

"But who can afford to pay you for your services, here?" I asked.

"Oh, the officers, propagandists, party members, Gay Payoo men and *kustari* (artisans), they have plenty of money," the brunette explained. "You foreigners do not know anything," she continued. "You think these higher officials get only two hundred to two hundred and fifty roubles a month as they tell you. That is a joke. The two hundred or two hundred and fifty roubles is only the fundamental salary scale on which they have to pay taxes. But you do not hear of the premiums they get for filling out their programmes. This is sometimes double their salary scale, and more. On this they pay no taxes, while we ordinary workers get no premiums and have to pay on our full wages." She was a shrewd article who seemed to understand a thing or two.

Then the blonde broke in:

"And do you think we enjoy loafing around in the street? Do you know what it means to come home dead tired and have to go out to sell yourself. How often I have to be with someone I hate! Often I feel like killing them in disgust. With you, *grajdaniin*, it is different. We will go with you any time. We will wait for you after the meeting."

Then I frankly told them of my plight, that I was afraid I would run short of money and, therefore, had to leave. They found it hard to believe that a foreigner could run short of money, but they finally left with the promise that I would meet them the next day at the same establishment.

It was 1.30 when I got aboard. The others had just returned from an elaborate concert and banquet given in our honour. They had been looking high and low for me. They told me that a ragged *landsman* (countryman) of mine, and also a fine-looking gentleman had been to see me. "You are a fine one to run off that way," they said. But I gave them no explanation and went to my room.

The next day we were notified that the boat would leave at three, but that we would be permitted to go ashore until then. Immediately after breakfast I hurried to the city. I did not want to take chances of a repetition of a double visit from my Hungarian friend—although I felt sorry for him—and the Gay Payoo man. I found out later that they had both returned, but I had wandered off into a near-by park, where I ran into a group of Persians who lived like gypsies in the open. They were skilful, itinerant artists who manufactured all kinds of utensils, tools, toys and trinkets of iron, steel, wood and clay. I remained at the park watching them until 2 p.m.

We did not leave until six in the evening. In the meantime, the boat was being loaded with many cases and barrels of fruits, vegetables and other provisions.

At three o'clock the workers from the factory came to the pier for a farewell celebration, with the usual music and speech-making. There were a good many girls at the dock. It seemed that most of the excursionists had found one or more sweethearts during our stay, and our departure from Astrakhan was marked by many affectionate leave-takings.

## CHAPTER XXV

### BACK TO STALINGRAD AND ENGELS

WHEN we returned to Stalingrad the next morning, everything was apparently arranged to counteract the bad impression of our last visit. The director, the party committee, the trade union committee and the factory committee were waiting for us at the pier.

Passes were ready for us and a trolley car awaited us to take us to the factory. We went through the factory watching the making of tractors from the very start to the finish. At one point, due to the general bustle and the pile of rubbish which cluttered up the floor, one of our German excursionists had his arm badly burnt by a passing piece of hot metal in the drop forge department.

After the tour through the factory, we were called to a meeting in the yard, where we were addressed by the factory director. He pointed out the wonderful progress which they were making and mentioned the fact that they were turning out 400 tractors a day. In conclusion, he urged us to make any suggestions and criticisms which we thought necessary.

Many of us on board ship had long arrived at the determination to get out of the Soviet Union as soon as we got back. We had seen enough, and we felt that we were through. I, therefore, felt more inclined to speak out. I now took the floor.

"*Tovarish* director! No doubt, if I were in your position, I would run away as you did when we were here last. Aren't you ashamed to disappear in that way when foreign *udarniks* come such a long way to visit your factory? There must be

something wrong if you act so. I don't blame you at all. I would do the same if I were responsible for such inefficiency as we saw just now.

"Why don't you clean up the wood chips, the metal scraps, and the dirt which is lying all around? How is it that finished parts are allowed to pile up and clutter up the plant. Only to-day, one of our excursionists was hurt as a result of the confusion in the forging department. Why are there so many finished tractors lying about in the open, unused and accumulating rust? Why is it that almost every second worker wears a bandage?"

The director rose to reply:

"Your criticisms are very valuable, *tovarish*. But you must understand that we do not have qualified workers here as you do in America. You ask why we have so many unused tractors about. We cannot help it. We have no time to repair them and clean them up, because more and more are being returned to the plant all the time. It is harder to fix them than to construct a new machine. The devil only knows what is going on. When we try out the finished tractors here they seem to work first-rate. As soon as they fall into somebody else's hands, outside the factory, they get out of order and are sent back here."

One of our Germans wanted to know whose fault it is that the tractors do not work properly, whether the fault does not lie with the factory itself. "Why don't you make fewer tractors and better ones?" he asked pointedly.

Again the director defended himself:

"If it were up to me, comrade, I certainly would do what you say. But it is not entirely up to me. You know that I must follow orders from Moscow. If the Agricultural Department orders more tractors, I must give them what they ask. Orders are orders, and a plan is a plan."

I noticed that the various party leaders were extremely nervous and fidgety during the director's last remarks. But it is not the practice of the Soviet officials to quarrel before the people, so no one openly took issue with him, although

they were evidently displeased with his criticisms of the authorities in Moscow.

If the director was later hauled over the coals for his remarks, this was done in private. I heard from some workers of the plant some time later, that this director was not in good standing with the party, but that they could not find another man to replace him. This was probably the reason why he dared to speak so frankly.

That evening we all dressed in our best for a concert and banquet which the local committee had arranged in our honour, in the Workers' Hall. The programme included the usual speeches and singers, dancers and orchestral music, but the excursionists were too disgusted to stomach any more of these things. They made a bee-line for the girls. They cleaned off the banquet tables of the packages of cigarettes placed at each plate, and the bottles of wine, vodka and champagne, of which there was an abundance, and the couples rushed back to the boat for a wild carouse.

We were supposed to sail that night right after midnight, but by 3 a.m. the couples could still be found in all parts of the boat. Despite numerous bugle blasts and exhortations, it was not until 3.30 a.m. that we finally got rid of our visitors and set sail for Saratov.

The expedition thus far had been a pitiful failure. One did not have to listen to the caustic remarks of the excursionists to realize that. All that was necessary was to look at the gloomy faces of the committee members, to realize that matters were not going well. These bureaucrats were, no doubt, much concerned as to the later consequences of the ill-fated trip, when they would themselves be called to account. Something drastic had to be done to remedy a bad situation. Meeting followed upon meeting, from which I was, of course, excluded, since I was no longer trusted. At last the golden opportunity came.

A day or two later we boarded a small vessel, which took us across the river to the outskirts of the city of Engels. Elaborate preparations were made on this occasion. We took along

our own dishes and the entire kitchen staff from our own boat. Also the entire motion picture staff, with all their apparatus accompanied us. We were supposed to be visiting a *kolhoz* in normal operation. But the general consensus of opinion among the excursionists was, "We are in for another circus now."

After an hour's walk from the boat landing we arrived at what seemed to be an open field, or pasture, for cattle grazing. It was an ideal picnic ground. First we noted that there were a number of newly constructed benches and tables of clean, smooth lumber scattered about. Our kitchen help, which had preceded us by auto, was busy cleaning and cutting up a number of freshly killed lambs.

Near the tables under the trees were huge piles of watermelons, apples, pears, tomatoes, potatoes, and great round loaves of delicious-looking white bread. On the tables, as an appetizer, were patties of fresh pot-cheese and the sweet cheese made from sheep milk, and also huge slices of white bread. There were plenty of bottles of wine and whisky, while a number of kegs of beer stood near the tables.

As we approached the spot we were greeted by the strains of a mixed orchestra playing a march. A huge sign stretched between two trees, "Long live the foreign *udarniks*." A group came forward to greet us. There were about eight men and two women. It was the welcoming committee. Near them in the background, seated on the grass and apparently waiting for us, was the remainder of the group numbering about two hundred and fifty men and women. They were, supposedly, workers of the Engels *Kolhoz*, which was part of the German colony in the Volga district.

But these people spoke only a broken German, some with a marked Yiddish accent. They were remarkably well-dressed for agricultural workers, mostly in sport attire, all with shoes or boots, more like a city crowd out for a holiday. Neither by their costume nor by their general physique could this group be mistaken for the emaciated and ragged workers whom we had seen on the farms.

We were terribly thirsty after our long walk in the hot sun, and we all rushed to the pile of water-melons. Some ate as many as three of the refreshing fruit, but we were urged to eat as many as we liked.

While the lamb goulash was cooking fragrantly, the band struck up some waltzes and polkas, the favourite German dances, but these so-called German workers did not seem very well acquainted with these steps. Later, when the band played the Russian "*Yablochko*," they seemed to be more at home.

Since the goulash was not yet ready, we formed a circle on the grass for a meeting. The speaker was introduced as a member of the committee of the Engels *Kolhoz*. He was a muscular man of about thirty-five, clad in a white sport shirt, grey knickers, black leggings and black shoes. He was clean-shaven and his hair was neatly trimmed. He spoke a fluent Russian, which was later translated into German.

"Comrades! Here you see how we live in the German Volga Republic. This is how we enjoy ourselves every *vikhodnoy* (rest day). This is how we starve," he said, pointing to the piles of food lying about in abundance. "This is the starvation about which Hitler is carrying so much propaganda in Germany.

"This is how we live, those who are not too lazy to work. No doubt you have seen some starving people on your tour through the German Volga Republic. But you should know that these are our enemies. These are counter-revolutionary elements who are hostile to our proletarian republic. We should be glad to let Hitler take these good-for-nothing elements off our hands.

"But we will never agree to what Hitler wants to do, to send food here for the benefit of these counter-revolutionary elements. We will never allow Hitler to send food to our enemies who do not want to work, and are busy only with propaganda against the Soviet Union.

"I appeal to you foreign workers, when you return to your factory, to your city and to your home, to answer Hitler, and tell what you saw in the Engels *kolhoz*. You should say to

Hitler: 'We don't need your help.' The people are happy here. We live better than we ever lived before. And for this we have to thank our Communist Party. We must thank our beloved leader—long live Comrade Stalin! Long live the Comintern! Long live the international world revolution! Down with the bourgeoisie! Down with Hitler!"

Our band and theirs joined in the Internationale. There was tumultuous singing and applause. After a little more singing, dancing and drinking, the goulash was finally served—although it was still somewhat raw, and lacking in salt and pepper. We ate heartily, nevertheless.

During the entire meal Tzelman was constantly pestering the German miner from the Don Basin to speak on behalf of our group. But the young man shook his head vigorously in refusal. He was unusually quiet during the entire affair.

After we had eaten as much as we could, there was a great deal of food left. We were urged to take all we desired back with us to the boat. The excursionists filled their pockets with fruit and vegetables. I was not in a mood to take advantage of the offer, and stood about waiting for the group to start, when the Don Basin German approached me and said:

"Comrade Smith, why don't you take some water-melon? Why not finish the circus!"

The motion picture men folded up their apparatus, with which the picnic had been filmed for the benefit of audiences throughout the Soviet Union, and for Soviet sympathizers throughout the world. The band packed their instruments and we started for the boat.

Tzelman's star performance, the performance that was intended to finally clear away all doubts in our minds, had failed miserably. A child could see that the whole thing had been staged for our particular benefit, and that the performers were not German colonists at all, but propagandists picked from somewhere for the occasion. We were not surprised, later, to learn that the entire group, consisting of *udarniks* and propagandists, had been shipped from Samara for our enlightenment, while the real colonists were kept at a safe distance from us.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE END OF OUR JOURNEY

IT took us four days to reach Gorky, the trip being interrupted occasionally when we stopped to bathe in the river. But we were by no means idle on board. The time was utilized to the full by the committee in charge. The motion picture staff got busy. They snapped us dining on the deck, the tables groaning with rich food of all kinds. This one was instructed to smile, that one was told to bite into a water-melon, and another was told to take a turkey leg in his fingers. They snapped us as we bathed, and as we lounged about taking sun-baths. Pictures were taken as we danced on the deck with the girls in the party.

The camera men catered particularly to me. They seemed most anxious to put me in a good frame of mind and to flatter my vanity. I was asked to pose in a corner of the deck while I made an amateurish sketch of some distant mountains.

Friends of mine have reported seeing this film in workers' clubs and theatres in various parts of Russia. They were also shown in news-reels in the United States. The impression which they create is that this is the life of the average worker in the Soviet Union.

On the fourth day, as we neared Gorky, we suddenly heard the shrieking of steamboat whistles, and the playing of several bands of music. We rushed to the deck to find out what the commotion was about.

A flotilla of four fireboats was approaching with sirens in full blast and the water streaming from their nozzles in fantastic designs. The boats performed all kinds of manœuvres as they steamed toward us. A number of other smaller boats

followed, decorated with Communist banners and slogans. A band played lustily on each boat, and as they neared us, those on board greeted us with ringing cheers. It was like the reception to Lindbergh, when that famous flyer returned to New York.

When the boats drew near enough, committee after committee came aboard and there was a steady stream of conferences among the leaders. "This is going to be the biggest circus of all," the excursionists said knowingly to each other.

Two Hungarians were part of the visiting committee representing the workers of the Gorky Automobile factory. "Well, you fellows are going to have a hell of a good time," they said to me. "A wonderful banquet has been arranged for you. There is one consolation, at least, for us. We will have a chance to get a good meal too, for a change."

We were taken to the other side of the river, opposite the city of Gorky. Autobuses were waiting at the pier and we were taken to an apartment house near the factory, one of a group of such houses, in which was located a huge restaurant.

All the buildings were decorated on the outside with posters and gay bunting, in our honour. In the distance we could see guards posted at strategic points keeping back the surging crowds of ordinary workers who clamoured to get closer. But only those with passes were admitted within the lines. Occasionally a bolder individual sneaked through the cordon, but the guards chased him off quickly with cries of "*Ukhoditye! Ukhoditye!*" (Go away! Go away!)

The inside of the huge dining hall was decorated with coloured lanterns and streamers of coloured paper. The tables were arranged so as to allow room for dancing. Each table contained a tasteful bouquet of flowers, a white linen table cloth and white linen napkins. The waitresses were clad in black dresses, with daintily clean white aprons and white caps.

Our hosts were the shock workers, propagandists, party and trade union secretaries, officials and technicians of the Gorky plant and nearby factories. All were well-dressed for the occasion, especially the women.

On the tables was an elaborate choice of appetizers,—cheese, fish, *kolbasa* (various kinds of sliced bologna), caviare and butter. Bottles of wine, vodka and champagne were scattered about in rich profusion. Then the waitresses passed about huge trays containing roast chicken and roast suckling pig and various kinds of salads. We were urged to help ourselves to as much as we desired. Finally, we had delicious tarts, fruit, coffee, tea or beer, compote and ice cream.

Most of the excursionists swung into the festivities with an attitude that seemed to say, "To hell with everything! To-day we live! Let us be merry!" They danced and drank so heavily, mixing their drinks liberally, that before long many of them were lying about like so many drunken pigs.

But, somehow or other, I could not enter into the spirit of the occasion. I partook very little of the food and drank only a little beer. Some of my fellow-travellers approached me and asked, "What is the matter with you, Smith? Why don't you enjoy yourself?" The girls came up to me and remarked, "Why aren't you happy like the rest of us, Comrade Smith? Are you sick?"

Yes, indeed, I was sick, sick at heart as the pictures I had seen at Saratov, at Dobrinka, at Stalingrad and Astrakhan floated through my memory, sick at heart at the thought of this drunken orgy, while thousands were dying nearby for want of a crust of bread.

The next morning we made a tour of the factory. We had with us a number of workers from this very plant, who were at the same time part of our excursion. They explained to me freely how confusedly things were arranged.

The plant had been originally planned by Ford engineers for operation on the Ford plan of standardization, with the help of many Ford workers imported for the purpose. Most of these had left long ago, in disgust.

For instance, in the Ford plant in America, they work for a number of successive days on the same kind of a car, thus avoiding the necessity for frequent changes in tools, machinery and operations. Instead of following this plan we found on

the conveyor a touring car, a closed car, a seven-passenger car, and a truck, one after the other. Under these conditions the Ford plan was a joke.

In the forge department we found four men, with huge pliers, laboriously carrying a heavy casting from the oven to the press, when this could more easily and safely be accomplished by one man, through the installation of a mechanical carrier with the proper pulleys and chains.

The machines we found were covered with dust and rust. They were not lined up properly so that the work could be carried smoothly from one operation to the next, but they were mixed up in a regular chop-suey—drill presses, lathes, milling machines in helter-skelter order.

We encountered a number of American auto workers in the plant. They were swearing about conditions continually and giving free and eloquent expression of their opinion about the Soviet Union in general. One Russian-American, we were told, stayed at home doing no work at all, but was receiving full pay because he was dissatisfied and they did not want him to return to America, where he might speak too freely about conditions at the Gorky plant.

After our tour of the factory, we were taken to the Red Corner where we had a meeting with the technical directors. They asked us for criticisms and suggestions. I spoke about the confusion and mismanagement I had seen in the factory, and expressed my disgust at the fact that the ordinary workers of the plant, who were no doubt hungry, had been chased away by armed guards while we were gorging ourselves. They looked rather sour at this, but made no comment.

That night we departed for the various cities from which the excursionists came. I boarded the train for Moscow, where I arrived on September 29th.

At the outset of our trip, before the tragic scenes at Dobrinka were witnessed by us, I had promised one of the women propagandists aboard the boat to broadcast a speech in the Slovak language, after our trip was over. At Gorky she came to me and reminded me of my promise, saying that

all arrangements had been made for broadcasting over the *Vzpsc* Station in Moscow, on October 1st, at 2 a.m.

It was to be an international broadcast, with one speaker in Bohemian, one in German, one in English, and I in Slavic. I was not very enthusiastic, but I could not get out of it. We were given a day to prepare our speeches for preliminary review by the radio editor. The other scheduled speakers were wiser than I. They promised again and again to prepare their talks, but they never did, and as a result they never spoke.

I prepared a six-page address along the lines of the talk given by the speaker we had heard at Engels. This was immediately rejected by the editor, a Bohemian. He did not like the reference I had made to starving people. I tried again, and again my effort was rejected. The editor took me in hand.

"You know the situation," he said to me. "The whole trip was intended for propaganda purposes. You must tell only good things."

"How can I tell of the good things, when I did not see anything good?" I asked.

"You are indeed a poor Communist," he declared. "Can't you prepare something enthusiastic, something that will be a good answer to Hitler?"

"Well, if you think I am a poor Communist," I said, somewhat heatedly, "then suppose we drop the whole matter. I tried my best and that is all I can do."

"In that case," he declared sternly, "we will make you speak. You are a party member. Remember that. And you will have to abide by party discipline."

Again the thoughts of the possible consequences of a breach of discipline went through my mind. What would happen to my wife? What would happen with my position? Would I be expelled from the Party? Perhaps I would be put into jail by the Gay Payoo. I agreed to try again.

I wrote up a speech containing the most foolishly enthusiastic twaddle I could think of, things that had never happened and that I had never seen. I let my imagination have full play, and I painted the rosiest picture I could think of. I thought,

perhaps, if I exaggerated sufficiently, they would reject the speech because I stretched the bluff too far. I was disappointed, however. When the editor read the speech, he exclaimed:

"That's fine! I knew you could do it!"

He promised me 250 roubles. But I left this cheque with him to be contributed to the MOPR, or some other worthy cause. My speech was delivered and later reprinted here in the *Rovnost Ludu*, the Communist Slavic daily newspaper. It was not what I would call the proudest moment of my life.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### I CALL UPON COMRADE TZEITLIN

I FELT it my duty to the party, as a responsible comrade, to explain what I had seen and what a fiasco the trip had been. Therefore I wrote a letter to the Moscow Committee of the Communist Party, in which I described the disillusionment of the excursionists and the disastrous results of our expedition. A month later I was called on the telephone to the office of the committee, to see Comrade Tzeitlin, who was handling the matter.

There were quite a number of people waiting in the anteroom, each one being required to register with the secretary. I was not required to wait, but was immediately ushered into the inner sanctum.

Comrade Tzeitlin was a tall woman of about sixty, with white hair and a permanent wave. She was clad in a white silk dress, a heavy white silk shawl was thrown over her shoulders and she wore white shoes to match. As I entered, she invited me to take a chair close to her desk. She offered me a package of Troika cigarettes and asked whether I preferred wine or fruit water. She had a glass of golden wine near her, while she smoked cigarette after cigarette. There was a hand-carved wooden ash-tray near us, and at the farther corner of the desk a large portrait of Stalin.

She opened the conversation with a cordial smile and asked about my past history—how long I had been in the party, and how long I had been in the Soviet Union. Then she took up the question I had raised in my letter and asked me what I meant by declaring that the trip had not been properly organized. I touched upon the inefficiency shown in

the arrangements and finally I described my experiences in Dobrinka, to give her an idea of what we had gone through.

As she listened to me she grew terribly nervous. She began pacing up and down on the Oriental rug smoking furiously all the time. I thought she would explode. Finally, she could stand it no longer.

"What is this? What are you talking about?" she spluttered. "Nobody ever died in the Soviet Union of hunger. That is all nonsense. And, besides, how do you know these people died of starvation? Maybe, they died of something else."

"But Comrade Tzeitlin," I insisted. "I was right there. I spoke to the people who were burying them. And the German workers were with me. They returned broken-hearted after what they had seen."

"It is impossible! They may have been counter-revolutionary elements. They must have been *kulaks!*!" And she continued pacing up and down, excitedly.

Her remarks irritated me. "Do you think I am lying to you?" I asked, heatedly. "Do you think I am trying to fool you? You don't have to go very far from here to see starving people. Come with me to the railroad station and I will show you thousands of starving peasants who have just arrived from the Ukraine. Come with me to the Elektrozavod, and I will show you workers who have collapsed because of lack of food, being carried off in the ambulance to the hospital. The ambulance, laden with workers, makes this trip many times a day."

At this she shook a warning finger in my face and declared:

"Now see here, Comrade Smith. Remember, you are in the headquarters of the Moscow Committee of the Party."

"Where should I speak of such matters, if not here?" I inquired.

"Nowhere!" she snapped.

"I don't understand. Isn't the party supposed to know what is going on in the Soviet Union, or doesn't it want to know?"

Again she flew at me. "You are an American Communist.

When you come here, you are supposed to speak of the starvation in America, the seventeen million people out of work and starving to death, of the Hoovervilles, where the workers live, of the misery which you ran away from when you came here, of the Scottsboro boys—why don't you speak of these things?"

"Why should I speak of those things when you know them so well?" I asked, as she hopped about the room. "I thought that you, as a party leader, would be more interested in what is going on in the Soviet Union, although I know very well that there is no starvation in this building."

"*Khvatit! Dovolno!*" (That will suffice! Enough!) She fairly screamed at me. For several minutes she paced up and down like a caged lion. I felt for my cap and rose to go.

"Wait a minute," she flashed at me, after some deliberation. "Sit down. Have you accepted Soviet citizenship yet?" I replied in the negative.

"How is that? You call yourself a Communist and you have not even applied for citizenship in the workers' country?"

We both understood what she was driving at. If I had relinquished my American citizenship, my fate would have been sealed in twenty-four hours. But I resolved to keep up the game.

"I am a citizen of the world, Comrade Tzeitlin, a member of the world proletariat. In the United States it was my duty to accept citizenship in order to help the party in the class struggle. Several times I was a candidate for office in elections. But here in a workers' country, I don't see the necessity, since everybody is entitled to the same privileges."

I explained that I had just renewed my passport in Riga. "With that I can go where I please. You know the world is a big place. With a Soviet passport I cannot go where I please." She wanted to know what I meant.

"Is it not true?" I asked. "If I want to go to any city outside of Moscow, I have to get the approval and signature of at least twenty different officials."

"So you don't agree with the workers' government here?" she flung at me, trying a new tack.

"I don't agree with the confusion and misery which I find here," I answered.

Suddenly she glanced at her wrist watch and gave a horrified scream:

"I am late! It is all your fault! I must hurry to a meeting. But I will call you again."

She sailed out of the room and I too left, my confidence in the Communist bureaucracy having received another rude shock.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### I TRY TO GET SICK LEAVE FOR MY WIFE

ON the second day after the party meeting, I was suddenly notified at the factory that my wife was very ill. I hurried home and found her in bed. A doctor was already there. He had been summoned by a neighbour. He found her suffering from severe pressure around the heart, undoubtedly brought on by the strain of the last few days.

I rushed back to the factory, to the office of Comrade Jurov, and explained the situation to him. I wanted something done, and he promised that my wife would be sent to the hospital immediately.

"I am afraid that will not help," I said. "The doctor does not believe she can improve very much here. She is very homesick for the United States."

My wife's illness alarmed me and I had already figured out that perhaps we might use the present situation as a convenient opportunity for securing our passage back to America. But my hopes were quickly crushed.

"That is impossible," said Jurov quickly. "What is the matter with you, Comrade Smith? I am afraid your wife's condition is all your fault. Doesn't she have everything she needs? If you want a better room, just speak up and we will arrange it for you. I know that you have been used to living better in America. But we can arrange matters so that you have the same conveniences here. All you have to do is to say the word, and it will be done."

"I am sorry, Comrade Jurov," I replied. "I am afraid that you don't understand my wife. She is a Communist. It makes her feel very bad when she sees she has everything and the

other people have nothing. Sometimes, when I come home and she has prepared a good supper, she puts the spoon down on the table. She can't eat because she feels that the Russian workers do not have such food. I am afraid she can't be cured here."

"Then it is all your fault!" exclaimed Jurov. "You don't explain things properly to her. And suppose we send her to America, will you remain here?"

"I don't think she will go without me. She is afraid that if I remain here longer, I might get shot."

Jurov jumped from his chair. "Who told her that?"

"How should I know?" I said. "But everybody in the house remembers when Cherntsky was taken away by the Gay Payoo. Then there is a girl living on our corridor, who was a servant girl for Kaganovich. Her father was sent to Siberia because he demanded more bread for the workers on the sovhoz. A year ago, our old janitor was taken away. He was reported by Geyer, who acted as a spy. His family was chased out of the house.

"Every day my wife comes home with such stories which she hears. We, ourselves, used to hear how they shot the prisoners at night at the Sokolniki Prison, near which we lived. Not long ago we were visited here by Veronica Kovacs, a very active party member from the United States. She had just returned from Krasnador in the Caucasus. She told of hungry peasants eating human flesh, and sometimes even cutting flesh from the living. All these stories have made my wife sick."

Jurov was not pleased with the progress of our conversation. He was continually tearing up bits of paper in an agitated manner.

"The trouble with you Americans," he declared irritably, "is that you don't understand the history of the Russian people. You don't know, for instance, that we have among our many nationalities, a nation of cannibals, Self-Eaters, we call them. But that fact is well known to anyone familiar with our country. You should explain that to your wife."

"Again, I see you do not understand what kind of a person my wife is. She is not an illiterate. You should see our library at home. My wife can explain anything to you. I have heard of such a nation of cannibals near Archangelsk, but not in the Caucasus. You don't expect her to swallow such humbug, do you?"

"Well then, Comrade Smith, what *is* your opinion? What shall we do to quiet her nerves, and improve her condition?"

"I don't know, Comrade Jurov. It seems to me the only cure is to send her back to the United States."

"And how about you, Comrade Smith? Have you cooled down a bit?"

"No, not a bit!" I replied. "I don't believe that in a country as rich as Russia, which has resources enough to feed all of Europe, it is necessary for people to starve."

Here Jurov thought he would confound me by quoting Marx:

"Don't you know that Marx predicted that there would be considerable suffering in the transition period, between capitalism and socialism?"

"Maybe he said that," I retorted. "But I don't believe he ever said that such a period should last from ten to fifteen years. I don't believe he ever said that some people should live well, and others should starve. I am not so foolish as to believe that. It seems to me that a change in government is worth while only if it brings something for the people. Otherwise the revolution is not worth a pipeful of tobacco."

"Then you don't agree with us politically, Comrade Smith? Is that what I am to understand?"

"I don't agree with a system under which the majority starves and the minority has everything good," was my reply.

"You don't understand, Comrade Smith. As a Communist, you must learn."

"I am afraid, Comrade Jurov, I am too old to learn to approve of your system here."

"That's enough," cut in Jurov sharply. "I shall see you some other time."

As for the *putiovka* (sick leave certificate) for my wife, he said nothing. It was not until March, 1934, that my wife finally received permission to visit the sanatorium at Feodosia in the Crimea. What she witnessed there, and during her journey, made her condition worse than when she left Moscow.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### A MEETING OF THE PARTY AT THE ELEKTROZAVOD

IN November, 1933, our party unit received a letter from the Central Committee calling attention to the fact that the Elektrozavod was falling behind its annual programme. A meeting of the party members of the factory was called at the Workers' Theatre on the Vodenskaya Plostchad, to take action on this matter. It must be remembered, however, that these party members included all the propagandists, agitators, directors, secretaries, brigadiers and straw bosses of all kinds—the privileged aristocracy of the factory and not the ordinary workers actually engaged in production. Yet I found out there were a good many honest elements among them, who could express their opinions only in a concealed and indirect way and at considerable risk.

Petrovsky, the chief director of the factory and Kulakov, secretary of the party unit of the projector factory, were the first speakers. They complained that the workers were too materialistic, that they were not inspired by a desire to work energetically for the common good.

They declared that while our factory paper had boasted that we were ahead of our programme, it was all bluff. We were actually behind. Our budget did not balance. We were short in money, and the chief reason for all this was that the factory was not using its raw material properly. Half of it was wasted through carelessness and incorrect methods. A large percentage of the finished products were being returned as defective.

They called upon the party members to show the way to the other workers of the factory, to inspire them in order to get

better results and fill out the programme. They urged us to present suggestions and criticisms, so that the work of the factory might be improved. They were followed by the various department secretaries, all speaking along the same lines.

I listened carefully to the various speeches. My impression was that these speakers were really sincere in their desire for constructive suggestions and criticisms. In spite of the shock I had received since my arrival in the Soviet Union, my faith in the Communist Party remained deeply rooted. I still felt, despite all evidence to the contrary, that these were the cream of the workers in the factory, the most devoted and self-sacrificing group. In all sincerity, I took the floor to present my views.

"Comrades," I began, "I agree with Comrade Petrovsky and Comrade Kulakov. They have explained our shortcomings very well. But they do not present any remedy. In our department, for instance, there are too many bosses walking around doing nothing. The calculators are continually cutting the piece rates with the result that the workers earn less and have to work faster, in order to make their quota. That is why we have such poor work. Meanwhile the calculator gets a percentage added to his pay, because he has cut the cost of production. The officials of the factory are themselves responsible for the breakdown in the programme. Seventy-five per cent of the bosses walking around the factory are loafers. We do not need them. These loafers get high wages and premiums while the workers do not get enough for their daily expenses. If you want to get cheaper production, you should fire some of these loafers."

At this point, Jurov, the secretary of the party for the entire factory, interrupted me. I was speaking too frankly, and the bureaucrats were getting uneasy. Jurov suggested that a motion be made to set a time limit for each speaker. One motion was made for five minutes, another for twenty minutes, another for a half-hour, and still another that I be permitted to speak as long as I pleased. It was evident that some

of the party members desired to hear me, and wanted to encourage me to go on.

Jurov took matters in hand decisively.

"I am afraid," he said, "that if we let Comrade Smith go on, he will never stop, and you must remember that we still have important work to do. Unfortunately, Comrade Smith does not understand conditions in the Soviet Union. He does not understand that we do not have Socialism or Communism yet."

I was very much discouraged by the fact that Jurov, the party secretary, in spite of the previous appeals for constructive suggestions and criticisms, was trying to shut me off. I did not feel like speaking any longer. I said:

"Comrades, I will not speak much longer. Let me conclude by saying that it is true that we do not have Socialism or Communism in the Soviet Union. But even in the capitalist countries the workers get at least enough to live on and to clothe themselves. What disturbs me is, that that is not the case in the Soviet Union.

"I saw this with my own eyes on my trip to the Volga. Many people were starving. The Soviet Union can never go ahead as long as the workers are not satisfied, as long as the workers are starving. It is starvation that holds back our programme, Comrades."

At this point there were shouts from the *presidium* (committee in charge of the meeting), which was seated at the back of the hall:

"It is a lie! He is a counter-revolutionist!"

Unable to control myself, I shouted back:

"Yes, everybody is a counter-revolutionist who is with the workers! Why don't you give more bread to the workers? In America they feed the dogs better than you feed the working class here. That's all! I'm through." And I sat down.

The air was tense in the meeting hall. The stage was set for a lynching party in which I might be the victim. But the party members waited in a disciplined manner until the cue would be given by the leaders, as to the official attitude toward

my provocative speech. The cooler heads in the meeting understood clearly that any action against me might have serious consequences, since I was still an American citizen with an American passport.

Jurov rose and turned toward the *presidium*:

"Comrades, you don't know Comrade Smith. He is not a counter-revolutionist. He is a good Communist. We know his record in the American party, and how he gave up all his savings to the Communist Party.

"The trouble is that he does not understand our difficulties, although he is trying his best to help us. As soon as he sees something wrong in the factory, he rushes to my office. I see him very often, and he helps us correct many mistakes."

I was astonished to hear these flattering words. It was not what I had expected.

Jurov continued:

"The chief mistake which Comrade Smith makes, however, is to ask us to pay the workers more. If we paid the workers more, then we all would starve. We cannot do that. If we paid higher wages and reduced the price of food, we would not have enough to supply all the people. We, as Communists, must eat and live better than the workers. We have greater responsibilities. Everything depends upon us. For instance, to-day we have stayed in the factory long after the other workers have gone home. And that happens almost every day.

"Don't worry, Comrade Smith, because you do not find conditions as good as you expected to find them here. Don't worry that you saw people dying of hunger. If twenty millions die of hunger, we will still have plenty of people to continue our work. And what does it matter if millions of people die, as long as we are building Socialism?

"Don't worry your head about things which you do not understand, and which do not concern you, Comrade Smith. Personally, I like you very much. You have no kick coming. You have enough, haven't you? If you do not have enough all you have to do is to ask for more. Meanwhile, don't worry

about the rest of the workers. Keep yourself strong and healthy. When we have established Socialism, the rest of the workers will have it better too."

He now turned toward his audience:

"One final word, comrades. I want no one to call Comrade Smith a counter-revolutionist. You must overlook what he has said here. He does not know any better. And this is our fault, because we have not educated him better.

"We should immediately take up with our Foreign Department the question of educating our foreign specialists to understand conditions in the Soviet Union. And now, let us get back as quickly as possible to our resolution on filling the programme and the election of a committee to carry out our proposals."

When I heard Jurov expound this new Communist doctrine, it seemed to me that the world had turned topsy-turvy. I thought of the memorable words of the Communist Manifesto, "They [the Communists] have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole," which I had so often read, and taken so deeply to heart.

I thought of the words of Lenin, that Communists must keep in close contact with the masses and win their confidence by defending their interests at all times. I remembered the instance which had often been cited to me, of the Russian Communists under the Czar who fought even for a little more hot tea for the Russian workers.

Yet here was a Communist leader cold-bloodedly defending the systematic starvation of an entire people and actually justifying the wiping out of millions. And what for?

If Jurov were sincere in his appeal that such sacrifices were justified for the great ideal of the building of Socialism, then why were sacrifices demanded only of the poor workers and peasants, and not of the Communists? And who would be left to enjoy the Socialist paradise of the future, if human beings were thus left to die by the millions in the meantime? Was it not all a tragic fable meant only to fasten the yoke of a cruel, self-seeking bureaucracy upon the Russian people?

What had become of the teachings of Marx and Lenin, that Communists should be the most devoted, the most self-sacrificing, the most class-conscious among the masses? Where was the justification for the doctrine of inhuman selfishness which I had just heard, the doctrine which made legitimate the privileges and luxuries of a favoured bureaucracy, while the great masses of the people starved? Was it for this that I had come to the Soviet Union? Was it for this that the Russian workers and peasants had achieved their Revolution?

These were the thoughts which agitated my mind. The meeting continued for a short time. The other speakers took their cues from Jurov, and each one uttered some praise of my work and some tribute to the sincerity of my motive. But they were only pouring salt into my wounds.

After the adoption of a resolution, and the election of an action committee to carry out the approved programme, there was a banquet. But I did not eat. I was very nervous. Had I made a mistake? Were they hiding their real intentions from me? Were the words of praise merely a cover for some punitive action which would follow?

Various party members came up to me. They slapped me on the back. One said, "Anybody who calls Smith a counter-revolutionist is a *durak* (fool)." Some shouted, "Hooray for Comrade Smith!" Suddenly I was raised on the shoulders of the crowd and thrown high in the air, amid rousing cheers. "Why don't you eat and be merry?" they cried jovially. But I thought to myself, "Sooner would I live on a crust of black bread, along with the poor Russian workers and suffer with them, than subscribe to such a doctrine."

When I got home after the banquet, I was heartbroken. My wife took one look at my face and burst out:

"What is the matter? Something wrong at the factory again! I can see it in your face. You have had a fight again."

I tried to calm her and told her it was nothing, but she would not be quieted.

"What will happen to you? They will shoot you. What shall I do then? Let us get out of this terrible country, while

we can, even if we lose everything. We can still make a living in the United States."

"No," I said obstinately, "we are not going back. I intend to stay here as long as I have my American passport."

This question was the subject of constant controversy at home, since the earliest days of our arrival in the Soviet Union. My wife had insisted from the outset that we had made a mistake, and that we return. But I doggedly refused to recognize that I had made a mistake. The more she complained, the more obstinately I made up my mind to stick it out at all costs.

She continued crying bitterly:

"Yes, you will go to the United States when they shoot you down, and they take you out in a coffin. Why didn't you take the advice of Tomek, the engineer, who went back to the United States a year and a half ago? He told you to go back with him. He told you they will never build Socialism here.

"I know I am going to lose you here, because you don't watch your tongue. It was the same in America. You were always fighting for justice in the party, in the union and in the fraternal society. But remember that you are not in America now. Haven't I heard from my friends and neighbours what they do with people like you? If you do not leave I will go without you. I will jump out of a window. I will hang myself. You will find me dead. I will not be a witness when they shoot you down. You will get a stroke just like Anna Wikkukel's husband, that political refugee from Hungary, who died from a heart attack after a meeting. Then there was Chernitsky, the best comrade in the Hungarian Commune, who disappeared in 1932. The Gay Payoo will take you too. You will lose everything. You will lose your life, and what for? For such Communism as you have here? It is much worse than capitalism."

Neither of us slept that night. The next day my wife was sick in bed with a nervous attack.

## CHAPTER XXX

### I WRITE TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

I WAS doing a lot of thinking these days, and I confess I was growing daily more and more embittered. My wife's condition was becoming steadily worse. Jurov had done nothing for her. I had long given up all hope in the building of Socialism in the Soviet Union—the ideal for which I had left the United States.

While I now had definite evidence that my life was in danger, and while my wife kept constantly drumming this fact into my ears, yet the intoxication of the fight against the bureaucracy was in my blood and I longed to keep at it, at least until my passport expired. I hoped that this fight might culminate in my expulsion from the party and then perhaps we might more easily secure our passage back to the United States.

In January, 1934, I resolved to write a letter direct to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the body which really rules the Soviet Union. I was extremely sharp in this letter and minced no words in my criticism. I stressed particularly my wife's condition and my dissatisfaction because she had received no assistance. Perhaps the letter would arouse such condemnation that I would be expelled. Perhaps I, too, would be given twenty-four hours to leave the Soviet Union, as was done with Szabo, the Hungarian-American and Gerner, the German.

I received no answer to my letter until February 25th when a committee came to my home from the VCSPS (Central Office of the Trade Unions). My wife was sick in bed, so sick in fact that I had stayed home from work. The committee wanted to know why I had not appealed to other channels, instead of going direct to the Central Committee. I told them that I had

tried every possible means without success. They asked me if I really believed what I wrote in the letter, that the capitalists treat dogs better than the Soviet Government treats the workers. I said I did. And the battle was on.

"Is there a country in the world," I asked, "where the sick wife of a worker would be left for months without medical help if she needed it as badly as my wife does?"

"Didn't she have a doctor?"

"Yes," I said, "she had many doctors, but what good did it do? A few days ago the doctor from the district clinic was here. He wrote out a prescription but he told me that I could get it filled only in the Torgsin, the Kremlin or the Gay Payoo drug stores. He might as well have told me to go to the North Pole. You know very well that I have neither gold nor foreign money for the Torgsin, nor a *talon* (book of tickets) to buy in the Kremlin or the Gay Payoo stores. You know very well that these stores are only for the leaders, only for the bureaucrats.

"Tell me what I shall do now? Do you think I am going to suffer in silence like the Russian workers? If I don't get medical help immediately for my wife I intend to apply to the party for permission to return to the United States."

The spokesman for the group tried to soothe my feelings. "You must not get excited. You would not get any medicine you like in America, would you?"

I flew into a rage. "You blind people," I cried, "how can you ask such a foolish question? Do you think people would suffer in America as they do here? Do you actually believe all the propaganda issued here about America is true? That is all nonsense. The workers there can get all kinds of help and they don't have to run to hundreds of bureaucrats for it either."

"Why did you come here if it is so much better in America?" asked the spokesman.

"Why?" I replied. "Because I thought this is a workers' country. Because I thought the workers rule here. Tell me, have I deceived myself or not? What power do the workers really have here anyway?"

"That depends upon how you look at it, comrade. Of course, it would be ridiculous to allow the ordinary workers to rule the country. They are too backward. We would have a nice state of affairs if we allowed the people who are ignorant and untrained to run things. But the people rule, indirectly. The workers' leaders govern the country for the benefit of the people."

"What kind of leaders do you call such individuals who take all kinds of privileges for themselves, while the workers get nothing?" I demanded. "Parasites, I call them, who are pressing down the workers to a level unfit for human beings, to a level unfit even for dogs."

At this moment there was a timid rap at the door. I opened the door and there was a beggar woman in the usual rags, with one sickly-looking child on her arm and two more at her skirt, one about three, the other about five years of age. I called them into the room.

"Here," I said, introducing my visitors to the committee with mock formality, "are some of your people. Look at them. Do they look like human beings? You say that the leaders run the country for the benefit of the people. What have your leaders ever done for people like these?"

The members of the committee were very uncomfortable. They had not come prepared to meet the awkward situation in which I had placed them. They made no attempt to reply to my question.

Then came another rap at the door. Again I opened it, this time to admit almost a skeleton of a man, from whom the rags hung in loose fragments. He was indescribably filthy and uncared for. He was part of the usual army of mendicants who came to my home daily. I introduced the newcomer to the committee, but they became more ill at ease than ever.

"Tell me now," I said, "what kind of representation have these people in the Government? I demand an answer from you."

Instead of replying, the spokesman turned to the woman and asked:

"Where are you from?"

"From the Ukraine."

"What are you doing here?"

Somewhat emboldened by my attitude the woman replied:

"What kind of a question is that? I am like thousands of other poor peasants who have come here, wandering from city to city, in search of bread for my children."

"Is it not true that your reason for doing this is because you do not want to work?" asked the committee's spokesman.

"You should be ashamed to speak like that!" the woman replied. "Yes, there is plenty of work, but no bread. They have taken away all that we produce. How could we work without food or clothing? The lice ate us up. We had not even a piece of soap. Our people died by the hundreds all about us. That is why we ran away."

At this point I intervened. "What have you to say about this?" I asked of the committee. "Is this what these people deserve from their representatives? Look at these children. There are plenty of schools. Why are there no schools for them? Why are they not cared for? Even the schools and the nurseries are set aside for the children of the bureaucracy." Turning to the other beggar I asked, "And where do you come from?"

Unaccustomed to such civilized surroundings the derelict looked at the floor and shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. Then he timidly told us his tale.

"I am a poor peasant from the Caucasus," he said. "Until last year I had my own little farm, with one horse and one cow. The Government took from me my horse and cow and even my wooden plough. They seized all my products. I was left without anything. All that I could do was to go out and beg for bread."

The committee was anxious to get back to my matter again. It was getting late and they were impatient. I divided what bread I had in the house between the two beggars, gave them a few roubles and they departed.

"Tell us now," demanded the committee chairman, "just what you want."

"I demand immediate help for my wife. I am determined not to work as long as she is sick. I will sit at home and you must pay me my full salary. I want another room. This one on the fifth floor is too high for my wife. It is too cold and damp. If I don't get what I want I shall immediately apply to the party for permission to return. Maybe I will get some help elsewhere beside, since the American Consul is here now. The devil take the system here. I don't know how long the Russian people will stand for it. But one thing I know, and that is that I won't stand it any longer."

The committee chairman tried to calm me. "Don't get excited, comrade. We will arrange everything. You need not go to the factory while your wife is sick. We will arrange for her treatment." They started for the door. The atmosphere was far from cordial. There was no handshaking or leave-taking. They could hardly find the door, in their anxiety to leave.

"And be sure that if you send my wife somewhere, you send her to a place fit for human beings," I called out as they departed.

On February 26th I received a telephone call to report at the factory. Everything had been arranged for my wife to go to the Sanatorium at Feodosia on March 1st. Sklar, in charge of the Foreign Bureau, took pains to point out to me how fortunate I was to get everything free except railroad tickets. "What you have to do now," he urged, "is not to talk too much."

## CHAPTER XXXI

### AT THE KALININ SANATORIUM BY MARIA SMITH

IN March, 1934, I was sent to the Kalinin Sanatorium at Feodosia, Crimea, on the shores of the Black Sea. Here I was to receive treatment for my nerves. I had been quite sick in the United States but the terrible conditions which I witnessed in Russia every day upset me still more. My husband secured the necessary *putiovka* (sanatorium tickets and credentials) through the trade union department of the factory.

The officials of the sanatorium were very much surprised to see me, for it seems that few ordinary workers ever get an opportunity to go to these sanatoria. Of the five hundred patients at the institution there were only about fifty workers. The greatest part were the ladies of engineers, privileged workers, propagandists and other highly paid officials, who were in a special category as far as food and privileges were concerned.

There was R—, for instance. My friend Marusya engaged her in conversation one day, at the table.

"Where do you come from?" asked Marusya.

"From Moscow," answered R— haughtily. Meanwhile she kept her *legitimacia* (credential book) open in her lap as if to verify her answers to questions put to her.

But Marusya was shrewd and she took a side glance at the pages of the book.

"Oh, you have credentials from the VZSPS" (All Russian Trade Union Commission), she remarked. "You were at the CKBU!" (This is a high class clinic in Moscow for the higher officials.)

Taken off her guard, R— closed her book hurriedly and tartly replied:

"I don't work any place. I don't care to speak about myself too much." She blushed deeply and left the room hurriedly.

D—— W—— was there with her husband, a high railroad official. When she was in my room she used to complain occasionally of backaches. But this did not prevent her from attending the gay dances which were held every second night. I asked her why her husband was there.

"He is here to keep his eye on me," she replied with a smile.  
"He is afraid I might find another man."

I could see nothing wrong with the health of either of them.

K—— S—— was the wife of one of the engineers involved in the famous Ramzin case. He had been in gaol for one year and he was now receiving 700 roubles a month. His wife was paying 390 roubles a month to stay at the Sanatorium.

Anna and Marusya were two good-looking, well-built and smartly dressed girls. Both had just come from the mineral water springs at Zelenogradsk. Dr. Y—— had just signed a certificate for them both to go to Kislovodsk, in South Caucasia, another mineral water spring resort. Why did these two girls receive such unusual privileges? The reason was not far to seek. They were not sick at all. They would stay out until all hours of the night with various engineers, propagandists and other privileged characters. So these two girls were transferred from sanatorium to sanatorium for the enjoyment of the Soviet bureaucracy.

B—— R—— was the wife of a Moscow professor. She was a typical snob. She was there to take care of her husband, who had come to recuperate from overwork. One day I heard B—— R—— upbraid her husband in the following manner:

"How is it that you did not bring your documents with you to show who you are? Because of your carelessness, we will have constant trouble here. They will treat us as ordinary workers."

With the necessary credentials B—— R—— could get a better room, better food and better treatment than the other patients.

The patients who did not have the necessary pull, received a diet that made them sicker than before they entered the

place. There was the usual black *kasha* without fats of any kind, sour black bread, "cutlet" made of stale bread and fish. Feodosia was a fishing and canning centre. But we rarely saw any fresh fish.

On March 19, 1934, there was a riot in the dining-room because of the rotten food which was served. As we entered we found bowls of sauerkraut soup, in which the cabbage was still raw, along with the stale bread "cutlets." But this time the food was unusually bad. The patients rebelled and refused to eat. We had nothing eatable except carrot *pirojni* (cakes) and *kissel* (potato starch dessert with a slight fruit flavour). That night the same sauerkraut was served again in the form of *pirojni*. A number of patients decided to send anonymous complaints to the VZSPS, in Moscow.

About a week later a commission of five was sent from Moscow to investigate conditions at the Sanatorium. One could see by the tremendous bustle about the place during the preceding days that something important was being prepared for. The rooms were cleaned up and scrubbed as never before. Militia men patrolled the streets of the vicinity. No peasant carts were allowed in the neighbourhood. Stephen, the one-legged peasant sweeper boy, was instructed to clear out the mud from the paths and clean white sand was substituted. To his amazement, the poor lad was given a clean shirt, trousers and even a stocking for his one foot. The *bezprizornia* (waifs) Ivan, Vassil and Kolya, who used to prowl about to beg for bread secretly, were driven off by the militia. The sheets were changed on our beds and the entire place was transformed in preparation for the visit of the commission.

The dining-room was not the same when the commission arrived. We had clean table cloths, even fresh-cut flowers. We had bacon for breakfast, eggs and milk, a most unusual sight for us. For dinner we had potato soup, chicken, rice and *piroshni*. The food was distinctly better.

The commission began to examine the patients regarding conditions, but everyone refused to talk. They feared the consequences. When they came to me, I told them the truth about

the rotten food, the cold rooms, the bedbugs and the filth. I told them about the common toilet for seventy people, used by men and women. I had nothing to lose. Everything was written down by the secretary of the commission. When I asked the other patients why they did not speak out, they said:

"We can't say anything. We are not foreigners like you: You can go back to America. We have to stay here."

Nothing was changed as a result of the commission's visit.

Everything was the same as before. The commission spent most of its time going out with the girls, riding around in the director's machine, dining sumptuously at the expense of the institution while they pocketed the money which they were supposed to use to stay at a hotel in Feodosia. For two days prior to their coming, their rooms had been heated in order to make them cosy enough for the distinguished guests. The commission left after a round of merrymaking with the cordial greetings of the directors and propagandists. But they left a train of bitterness in the hearts of the patients who had to continue to bear the burden of cruel mismanagement which characterised the Kalinin Sanatorium.

One morning there was a line of about fifteen women waiting in the hallway for entrance to the nurse's office for medicine. As I came to the line I heard the doctor exclaim in a loud voice, "No medicine this morning, *grajdanki* (citizens)! You will have plenty of medicine to-night, when all the men are coming." As the line broke up I could scarcely believe what I had heard. I spoke to one of the women and asked her whether I had heard aright. "That's what he said," she replied.

The spirit of the Sanatorium was well expressed by a little ditty which the performers used to sing at our entertainments. It ran as follows:

Jiguli, jiguli, jiguli!

There you are, our sick little boys,  
The nightingale sings in the tree,

While the sick boy and the sick girl,  
Under the branches are waiting.

Jiguli, jiguli, jiguli!

There you are, our sick little boys.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### THE STORY OF SONIA BY MARIA SMITH

I HAD been at the Sanatorium for a few days when Sonia came. She was a woman of about thirty, a party member. She was nothing but skin and bones. One day we had a conversation in my room. Besides Sonia, there was a Tartar woman named Nura. They asked me where I came from. After I had told them, I found that they both came from a near-by city.

When she found that I was an American, Sonia exclaimed:

"My mother told me that we got a lot of help from America in 1921, during the great famine."

At this Nura burst out:

"Yes, you got help, you Jews, but we got nothing. Thousands of us died. But I never heard of any Jew dying. You Jews got everything then, and you are getting everything now."

Her eyes were inflamed with prejudice as she made these remarks. At this attack, Sonia burst into tears. After Nura had left, Sonia confided her story to me.

"It is true, Comrade, I am a Jew. But the accusations of Nura are not justified. As I look into your eyes I feel that I can trust you with my story.

"I was a nurse and a party member. One day I was notified by the party, that I must go out as a propagandist to a *sovhoz* near-by. I had no idea what my duties were to be. I knew nothing about farming. When I asked for further information, I was told that I would receive full instruction at the *sovhoz*.

"The weather, when I set out in March, 1934, was very cold and there was considerable rain and snow. When I arrived

at the *sovhoz* I found there were a few bare wooden shacks for shelter. There was no bedding or covering of any kind. There was nothing in the way of farm equipment excepting a few tractors. The group assigned to work at the *sovhoz* did not arrive until a few hours after I had come.

"The group arrived at about four o'clock in the afternoon, two hundred komsomols, girls and boys ranging in age from seventeen to twenty-two. They were headed by a leader, a young man of about twenty-four, with absolutely no agricultural training. The group was supposed to receive training in handling tractors. This training was being entrusted to me and to the Komsomol leader.

"This Komsomol leader was a typical propagandist, a smooth talker, a man who had no interest in or sympathy for the workers. He told me that he would only stay for a day or so, that he was departing for another *sovhoz* and that he was leaving me in charge.

"I appealed to him: 'What shall I do with these young people? What shall I teach them?' 'Oh, teach them about the achievements of the other *sovhozi*. Teach them to work enthusiastically to carry out the Five Year Plan, and to build up Socialism,' he replied.

"But I don't know anything about tractors or about farming!' I said.

"Well, to tell the truth, Comrade,' he admitted, 'I don't know very much about these things myself.'

"Where shall these people sleep?" I asked.

"That's your business," he replied gruffly.

"But there is not a drop of food on the farm," I complained.

"At this he informed me that food would be coming soon from a nearby *sovhoz*.

"I looked about the farm for water and I was shown a barrel containing some muddy water not fit for cattle. This water had to be transported for miles before it reached the *sovhoz*.

"The young people had to sleep on the bare ground without

covers, the boys and girls in one long, weather beaten shack.

"Somehow or other the word had passed about that neither I nor the Komsomol leader knew very much about tractors or farming. Evidently someone had overheard us talking. When I got up to speak to the group, trying with all my power to go through with the usual propaganda speech, the youngsters howled me down. They did the same with the propagandist. They demanded bread and shelter.

"Some of the group tried to work with the tractors. Unfamiliar with these intricate machines a number of them injured themselves severely. There was no medical treatment to be had.

"At nine o'clock that night there was still no bread. The leader had left for a nearby *sovhoz*. He did not return until the following day at three in the afternoon, bringing twenty-five loaves of black bread for the two hundred famished youngsters.

"I did not know what to say to the group any more. In fact I was afraid that they would attack me physically, as the one responsible for their plight. I was between two fires. On the one hand there were the youngsters in whose eyes I was the author of their misery. On the other hand there was the implacable Komsomol leader holding before me the constant threat of party discipline. I thought of my own two children. 'Is this the life that is in store for them?' I asked myself. I was in tears almost all of the time.

"When the leader returned I told him that it was impossible for me to go on, that I would have to quit. 'I can do nothing here. These young people are hungry. They have no place to rest properly. How can they work?'

"'What?' he exclaimed angrily. 'That is impossible. You cannot leave your post of duty as a Communist. You must stay right here and teach and organize the group. How much do you get a month?' he asked.

"When he heard that I was getting 200 roubles a month, he cried: 'We will see about this violation of discipline. We

will see what we can do with people like you, who get high pay and do not carry out orders. We must have these young people trained so that they are ready for the coming harvest. We will cut your pay to 150 roubles a month and see whether that will wake you up a bit.'

"I could only weep in reply.

"But no matter how resolutely I would try to carry out the Party instructions, it was humanly impossible. I could not witness how these young people were being starved and yet driven to toil at labour for which they were unfitted, and too weak to carry out. My heart bled for them. Finally I broke down under the strain. My nerves gave way. And that is why I am now in the Sanatorium."

It was hard for me to believe this story. I could not conceive of such conditions existing in the Soviet Union. Seeing my scepticism, Sonia said:

"That is nothing. If you only knew all that is going on here!"

But though I pressed her for further details, she refused to tell me any more.

Sonia's stay at the Sanatorium was to end April 2nd. On April 1st she became very ill. She had been ailing most of the time. When she had complained, the ward physician would make nothing of it. "*Nitchevo, Proidyot.*" (It is nothing. It will go away.) Now she ran a high fever. She was examined by a physician who diagnosed her illness as pneumonia of the womb. I do not know whether this was the result of exposure on the *sovhoz* or whether it was due to the poor heating facilities at the Sanatorium. At any rate Sonia was a very sick woman. It was decided that she would have to be taken to a hospital, where her illness could be treated.

About eleven o'clock in the morning, we saw an open peasant cart stop in front of the building. It was the type used to transport coal. Although Sonia was writhing about on her bed in dreadful pain all day, it was not until six in the evening that she had to walk down slowly and painfully to the cart. It was raining and the day was raw and chilly. Sonia was clad in

very thin clothes. She lay down on the bare, dirty boards at the bottom of the cart. There was not even a cover. I asked the nurse why they did not give her a blanket. "We cannot do that," snapped the nurse in reply. And so poor Sonia was taken over the rugged country roads in the bare open cart to the hospital, about one half-hour's ride from the Sanatorium.

About three days later I received the following letter from Sonia:

DEAR TOVARISH SMITH:

I write you just as I would write to my mother. You are the only one in the Sanatorium whom I can call a friend. Please buy me some food and some bread. I will return the money to you when I come to the Sanatorium to see you. I am slowly starving to death here. All I get here is some black macaroni and hot water, three times a day. If you don't feel well enough to do this, then please send me something through Polya (the peasant woman who was cleaning our room). She lives near the hospital. Thank you for everything which I know you are going to send. I kiss you many, many times,

Your SONIA.

The nurse was present when I read the letter. I asked her why it was not possible to send Sonia a little food from the Sanatorium.

"We cannot do that," was the reply. "You know Sonia's time expired on April 2nd."

I went to the market in Feodosia and bought some bread, sour cream, milk, a few eggs and apples and a little smoked fish and sent it off with Polya.

Two days later another letter came, with an enclosed letter to the director. I was anxious to know how Sonia was getting along, so I opened the enclosed letter and read it. The letter was about the same as mine, describing conditions in the hospital. Sonia asked the director to take her back to the Sanatorium. Although I saw to it that this message was duly delivered to the director, I found out from Sonia later that he had never replied.

Several days later I got another heart-rending letter from Sonia:

DEAR TOVARISH SMITH:

I sent a letter through you to the tovarish director and I am sure that you gave him the letter, but I have received no reply. Nobody on the staff seems to have any heart for a poor, suffering working-woman. Will you please speak to him personally? Our Russian people will not do this. They are afraid. But you are not.

I am so weak that I am not able to walk,

Yours,

SONIA.

I received this letter in the morning. About five o'clock in the afternoon Sonia stumbled into my room. She could not wait any longer for an answer to her appeal for assistance. She had walked the entire distance of several miles alone. She was deathly pale and the cold sweat ran down her haggard face. All of us in the room were frightened at her appearance. Sonia held herself up with difficulty and she wept at sight of us. We all wept. She sank down upon a *taburetka* (little stool) near the door. Sonia's bed was still empty. We urged her to lie down upon it. "No!" she exclaimed. "I dare not." In spite of her suffering she refused to violate discipline. I went out to try to arrange matters with the nurse.

The nurse came in when I called her.

"The Sanatorium is not a hospital," she exclaimed harshly as she entered. "I can't give you any linen. Your time is up and you cannot stay here."

My indignation rose as I listened to her. Finally I could control myself no longer.

"Is this a hospital for the workers or not?" I cried. "This is a nice picture which I, as a foreign worker, see here. Sonia, my dear, lie down on the bed. And you," I said to the nurse, "you had better give the poor girl some linen or I will report you to the director."

At this the nurse left the room angrily. She returned in about twenty minutes with the linen. "I am bringing this on

my own responsibility," she said as she entered, evidently awed at the storm I had raised.

There was an entertainment at the club that evening. When I returned it was about ten o'clock. Sonia was in bed. I asked her if she had had any supper. After considerable cross-examination on my part, she finally admitted that she had had none. She dared not ask for any. I ransacked a closet and found an apple and some bread, which she ate gratefully.

The next morning at eight Doctor Knikuta came to the room. I wanted to see what would happen so I appeared to leave the room but actually I listened to what transpired behind the door. This is what I heard.

"What do you think this is?" the doctor cried to Sonia. "Your time has expired and we have nothing to do with you. This is not a hospital. You had some nerve to ask for linen!"

At this, I walked in. I told him that I had had the nerve to ask for the linen. He blushed with embarrassment as did his wife, the nurse, who was with him.

At this moment there was a moan of pain from Sonia.

"I cannot go home to-day," she said, "in the condition I am in."

"Well, you can't stay here," repeated the doctor coldly.

"But I have no money with which to go," pleaded the sick girl. "Please, doctor, write to the *sovhoz* from which I came and they will send me money to go home. It is only 15 roubles I need."

"That is not my work," replied the doctor gruffly.

"Then will you please ask the director to write? I am too weak. I cannot write myself," she asked, trembling with fever.

"Very well," he replied. "Go down to the director and talk to him yourself."

The doctor and the nurse left the room.

Weak as she was, Sonia dragged herself from the bed and left for the director's office. She came back in ten minutes weeping. I asked her what had happened.

She threw herself on the bed in tears. "He would not even listen to me," she exclaimed. "Even a dog would have

barked if I spoke to him, but that heartless wretch would not even speak to a sick working-woman."

She asked me if I had any money. I had only five roubles.

Then she made up her mind to walk to the town where she had a friend. She would ask him for the money. I tried to persuade her that she was too weak to attempt the trip, which was a good half-hour's walk. But she was firm in her resolve. Groping along the walls and trembling at every step she set forth. She returned in about four hours completely exhausted. But she had obtained twenty roubles. But she had had no breakfast or dinner. It was about three o'clock. After a vocal argument with the nurse and the housekeeper I finally succeeded in getting Sonia a little soup and fish. The following night Sonia left for her home.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

HUNGER STRIKERS  
BY MARIA SMITH

I MADE many friends at the Sanatorium and in the town of Feodosia. Everywhere I was known as Maria Andreyvna, the *inostranka* (foreigner). Sometimes this occasioned me some embarrassment, when I would be hailed loudly at a street corner by a passing peddler or a street urchin whom I did not know.

Among my friends were the women attendants of the Sanatorium and it was my delight to get from them their life stories. A number of them confided to me that they were widows whose husbands had been shot by the Gay Payoo in 1933 at the time of the great hunger strike in Feodosia. The leaders of this local insurrection against the insufficiency of the bread supply had been executed, twenty-seven in all, as a stern example to the people of the town.

I remembered too, how my Moscow neighbour F—— had returned strangely agitated in 1933 from a visit to some relatives in Pushkino. She related that the inhabitants of the town had refused to work unless their bread ration was increased and that they had threatened to burn the town. Three regiments of soldiers had been sent to Pushkino, the ringleaders were shot and many were sent to jail. No news of this affair was ever printed in the Moscow newspapers. Now, however, I received an opportunity to learn more about such incidents at first hand.

One of my closest friends at the Sanatorium was Tania, a machine hand from Moscow. She was about twenty-five years of age and was recuperating from a nervous breakdown.

I noticed that she was frequently visited by a young man of about thirty, who resembled her very closely. The two seemed most devoted to each other and I wondered who he could be. One day as we were seated at the table I asked her.

She looked at me searchingly for a moment and then replied, "He is my brother Fedor."

"You seem to be very fond of him," I said.

"Yes," she said, "I love him deeply because he has suffered so much. I feel that I can trust you, Maria Andreyvna. Some day you will hear his story."

It was not long afterward that I was introduced to Fedor. He was astonished when he heard that I was from America. He had never spoken to an American before. He was a worker on a *kolhoz* near Moscow. He had developed heart trouble and was here for a cure.

"Maria Andreyvna would like to hear your story, Fedor. You can tell her everything," said Tania. "She is a party member from America. But she is not like the party members we have here. She is for the people. You can trust her."

Again a searching look as if he would peer into my very heart. Apparently he was satisfied. We decided to meet in the nearby park which faced the sea, that afternoon at four, after the cure and rest hours. At the appointed hour we met and seated ourselves on a bench. We were completely secluded. There was nothing to interrupt us save the ceaseless roar of the waves as they broke on the adjacent beach. He began his story.

"Five years ago I lived in the village of S—. As everywhere in the provinces, we were suffering from a shortage of bread. Conditions grew worse and worse. Men, women and children were dying daily in the streets. The people complained bitterly among themselves, weeping and wailing from morn till night. But they feared to make any organized protest or demand for relief.

"A number of us resolved that something must be done. I was the leader of the group. We organized a committee of

twenty-five to go to Moscow to plead for more bread. And then somebody squealed. We never found out who it was.

"I was sleeping at my father's house as usual one night. In the house was my old father and mother, my sister Tania, and my younger brother Peter. At about one thirty in the morning we heard a loud knock at the door. My father called out, 'Who is it?' 'Never mind who it is,' was the answer. 'Open the door.' Those outside began to kick at the door with heavy boots. Shivering with cold and fright my father lit a candle and opened the door. I heard my name called and went outside. There were six Gay Payoo men in full uniform. 'Get dressed,' a tall officer in command ordered gruffly. I dressed hurriedly. My mother was shrieking and wringing her hands. My father, my sister and my brother wept beside her but they could do nothing. They asked where I was being taken. There was no reply. As the door banged behind me, there was a sudden ray from a flashlight and I saw my committee, every one of the twenty-five was there—lined up in the courtyard awaiting their doom.

"'We want to know who is the leader of this hunger revolution,' said the Gay Payoo officer as they pushed me roughly into line.

"There was no answer for a moment. Then young Stephan spoke up. He was my closest friend and associate. 'We are all leaders here.'

"Realizing that they could get no information from us, they herded us into line and onward to the railroad station. I asked the officer where we were being taken. There was no reply. We were driven aboard a train which was waiting and rode until just before daybreak. It was still dark when we were hustled off into some wooden shacks near the station. I did not know where we were since we had been travelling at night. The next night we boarded the train again and travelled until we reached what seemed to be a small city. I had no way of finding out where we were. By the aid of flashlights we left the train to be led by the six Gay Payoo men who were with us, for a two-hour walk through a path in the woods until we came to a large body of water.

"Some sort of a barge was waiting for us at the shore. With curses and occasional blows we were driven aboard. We still had not the slightest idea of where we were or where they were taking us. It was still night. After an hour's ride we reached land. It was wild and wooded. I could discern no sign of habitation. As we stepped ashore we asked, 'What will happen to us here? Will someone bring us food in the morning? Will we work here?' The only answer was a loud guffaw and 'You will soon find out.' And the barge left us.

"We stood at the shore shivering with cold, for it was October and the night was chilly. We could not sleep. Would they come back and shoot us down? Trembling with cold and fear, we awaited the dawn.

"As the sun rose we saw more clearly where we were. It was a thickly wooded island a long distance from the nearest shore. We could see no houses or other human beings. There was no food to be had. Then we realized that we had been left here to perish.

"I felt in my pocket and found that my father had managed to slip in some bread and a half of a *seliodki* (dried fish). It was not enough for one, not to speak of twenty-five. I offered to share the little I had, but the others refused. 'One of us at least has to keep his strength in order to save us,' they said. We scrambled about the woods for roots, leaves and berries to eat. We screamed as loud as we could for help. But there was no answer. We grew weaker and weaker. It was the seventh day. The members of the group lay on the ground too exhausted to move. A number were already unconscious. It was a matter of hours only before nothing but lifeless corpses would remain.

"Finally Stephan, my friend, approached me. 'Fedor,' he said, 'something must be done. Let us take that log which is lying on the shore and try to float it across.' The only other alternative was slow but certain death.

"I thought the suggestion a good one and we started out immediately. We tried lying on the log full length but it was too narrow. We had to give up this idea. So we shoved off,

hanging to the log by our hands, our bodies in the water. We were both very weak from lack of food and exposure. The water was cold. We had been floating for some distance when Stephan cried out in a weak voice, 'Fedor, I can hold out no longer. I am very tired.' I tried to reach him, but I felt that if I relaxed my grip for an instant, I would lose my hold altogether. Then there was a quiet splash and my friend Stephan was gone.

"I don't know how long I floated thus, half-dazed, clutching the log in a grip of desperation. Finally I reached land. I staggered a few paces and then collapsed in a heap on the shore. I must have been in a sort of stupor for some time, when I was awakened by someone shaking my shoulder. I opened my eyes and saw an old peasant bending over me. He spoke to me but I could only mumble, 'Drink. Hungry.' I could say no more. He patted me reassuringly and said, 'I will be right back, my son.'

"He returned shortly carrying some bread and hot tea in a bottle. I was too weak to feed myself and he poured the welcome fluid into my mouth. He broke up the bread and fed me. When I had regained my strength partially, he asked me who I was and where I came from. As I told my story he looked about fearfully and urged me to speak softly.

"'What shall I do with you?' he murmured. 'I shall have to talk it over with my wife. You must stay here until I return when it is dark.' I mentioned those who still remained on the island but he could only shrug his shoulders helplessly. There was no boat in sight.

"In the evening he returned with a rude peasant cart. 'You shall come to my house,' he said. 'My wife knows everything. She will ask no questions.' When we arrived at the house the old lady taxed her meagre resources to the utmost to overwhelm me with attention, muttering all the time, 'What have they done to the poor lad? What a pity!' She insisted that I drink another cup of hot tea and go right to bed.

"In the morning we talked over what was to be done.

'Listen to me, my son,' declared the old peasant in his deliberate, kindly way, 'I shall see that you get back to your father's house. We shall start in my cart for the railroad station as soon as it is dark. My wife will bring the cart back here.'

"How can I ever repay you for your kindness?" I exclaimed. I knew that the old couple ran a terrible risk in order to help me.

"His kindly eyes twinkled as he said, 'In times like these we must help each other, my son.'

"When we arrived at the railroad station that night, I immediately took refuge in the toilet. I relied also upon my heavy growth of beard and the peasant's coat which the old couple had given me, to hide my identity.

"We arrived at my father's house in the dead of the night. When I knocked at the door, my mother asked who it was. I uttered my name and the door was opened cautiously. My mother looked at me as if I were a ghost. My father, my sister and brother flocked to the door to gaze at me in astonishment. When I had assured them of my identity, my mother fainted. Not a word had been told them of my whereabouts since my departure. They had given me up for dead.

"For two years I remained hidden in the house of my father, never going out. Finally I ventured forth to S—— where I have been working since under another name. Now you know my story."

It was time for us to return to the Sanatorium. I was too deeply stirred to offer any comment. I could only think of Tania's words, "I love him deeply because he has suffered so much." I could only think of the millions like Fedor and his companions doomed by the Soviet bureaucracy to suffer and die while the world outside stands unknowing and unmoved by the greatest of all tragedies.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### MY TRIP FROM FEODOSIA TO MOSCOW BY MARIA SMITH

IN April, 1934, I boarded the train for my return to Moscow from Feodosia, the end of the line. About thirty or forty people from the Sanatorium travelled with me, among them about five or six Red soldiers and their wives, an aviator, three Moscow women workers and a few others. About halfway between Kharkov and Moscow, at the little city of Orel, a dozen or more ragged peasants, men and women, boarded the train, carrying their inevitable bundles with farm products for sale or exchange for bread. They entered our car but were separated from us by the wall of the compartment.

As the train was leaving Orel, our group began to sing Russian revolutionary songs. We were in the midst of a lusty rendition of "The Comintern," when we noticed one of the peasants gazing at us through the door of the compartment and listening intently. He was a strong, energetic young fellow of about twenty-eight. He wore a black cap, a short black coat which looked quite worn and old, trousers that were a number of sizes too small for him and a pair of torn boots. Later we learned that his name was Volodya. He seemed to be a leading spirit among the peasants.

He waited until the singing had subsided. Then he sauntered over to our group and asked:

"Where do you all come from, *grajdani*? You seem to be in such jolly spirits."

Several voices answered him at once:

"From the Kurort! From the Sanatorium! From our vacation!"

He seemed to be controlling his feelings with difficulty "At this time of the year you come from the Sanatorium, and from your vacation?" he asked, and his face flushed with indignation. He suddenly called to his friends in the next compartment:

"Hey, *grajdani*, come here, come all of you! Here is something to look at!"

And as the peasants trooped in, in answer to his call, he added, pointing a mocking finger at us:

"They say they are sick! They are coming from the Kurort, from the Sanatorium, from their vacations, mind you. A fine lot of sick people they are! Did you hear how they were singing a few minutes ago? Vacations in the wintertime for them, and what do we have? Only hard work and starvation. Many of our people are really sick. And what becomes of them? They never go away except when they die."

I was astonished at his boldness in speaking thus before a group which included Government officials and military men. His recklessness could be explained only by the deep resentment aroused by the presence of our group flaunting its privileges in the face of an impoverished and oppressed peasantry.

Volodya's outburst brought a roar of approval from his companions. "*Pravelno, pravelno*" (That's right, that's right), they cried in chorus.

"Sixteen and eighteen hours we have to work, at three roubles a day, hardly enough for bread and hot water," shouted a peasant from the crowd.

The aviator came to quiet them. He began one of the usual propaganda speeches about the Five Year Plan and the building of Socialism, when he was rudely interrupted by a ragged old peasant with shrewd but kindly face. The old man spoke with passionate earnestness:

"We don't want any of your speeches. We have heard them before, many times. Always we get speeches and speeches. That's all you try to feed us with. Why don't you give us bread?"

"*Pravelno, batiushka!*" (That's right, grandfather!), shouted the peasants.

Seeing that mere propaganda would carry no weight with the angry peasants, the aviator decided to resort to other measures. He warned them to be careful, otherwise they would go to jail.

"That's all you can do," responded Volodya, "work us and starve us the whole year long, and then when we complain you threaten us with jail. Send us to jail if you like. At least we will have bread there once a day. Now we get bread only once in three days."

"For such a bunch of loafers we have to toil all day like slaves, and starve!" came a voice from the group of peasants.

The situation was becoming exceedingly tense. A soldier rose from his seat and advanced in a threatening manner toward the peasants. But his woman companion clutched his sleeve and cried:

"Don't, Andrei Mihailovitch! Don't start a fight. Let me try to pacify them."

She was a good-looking blonde of about thirty, clad in a silk dress and stylish shoes, a startling contrast to the tattered peasants about us.

"*Grajdani*," she began, "you don't understand the situation. I will explain it to you. I will explain why we have to go to the Sanatorium in the winter. You see, we are all city people. We are not strong, healthy people like you are in the villages. We are sick."

From among the haggard faces about him, the old man spoke up again:

"You, you are sick? You don't look sick to me. You should see my wife. She is really sick. She can't get out of bed. And there is no sanatorium for her."

The woman tried to continue, in spite of the interruption, but the peasants howled her down:

"*Ne nado*" (Never mind), they cried in derision. "We are sick and tired of your talk."

In despair the woman turned to me:

"Why don't you speak to these people? You are *immos-tranka* (a foreigner). They will listen to you." I told her

that I could not do this, since I was a foreigner and they would not understand me.

The little old man had noticed what had happened. He turned his sharp eyes upon me and asked:

"And who are you? Where do you come from?"

"I am from America," I replied.

"In America do they send such a bunch of loafers to the Sanatorium?" he inquired.

I made no answer. I felt that he included me among the loafers and I did not feel very proud of myself.

Then the peasants left for their own compartment. The aviator came to my seat and sat down beside me. He asked me what I thought of what had just occurred.

"It is very sad, *tovarish*," was all I could say.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### AT THE MOSCOW PARTY COMMITTEE

EARLY in March of 1934, while my wife was at the Sanatorium, I was notified at the factory that I must report to Comrade Brodskaya at the office of the Moscow Party Committee at once. I arrived at the office near the Ilyenka about two in the afternoon. When I registered at the desk in the reception room, the secretary informed me that Comrade Brodskaya was waiting to see me and I was ushered in to her office immediately.

Comrade Brodskaya was a woman of about fifty-five, unusually stout, with grey bobbed hair. She wore a very plain dress and a sweater. She used a pair of gold-rimmed glasses attached to a chain. She rang a small hand-bell after I had introduced myself and ordered her secretary to send in her stenographer. The latter came in and settled herself at a table, armed with a thick wad of paper and a handful of well-sharpened pencils. My letter to the Central Committee lay before her.

Offering me a trayful of cigarettes, she began:

*"Tovarish,* I understand from this letter that you are not satisfied. You make very serious charges. You complain particularly about how your wife is treated. You demand permission to return to America. I notice that you have an excellent record in the American party. I cannot understand your attitude. I cannot understand why you are dissatisfied and why you want to return. You know you have no future in the United States. I wish you would explain your letter to me more fully."

"Very well," I said, "I will explain, if you will let me speak freely. I came to this country with enthusiasm to help build

Socialism. I am completely disappointed because you are not building Socialism, but bureaucratism."

Here Brodskaya interrupted me:

"But what are these gigantic factories we are building? Is this not Socialism?"

"I don't call that Socialism at all. The factories are run by the State, but for the gain of certain individuals. Under Socialism the workers are entitled to the full product of their labour. But here the workers starve and a small privileged group appropriates the products for itself. Under Socialism if production increases, then the workers are supposed to benefit by improved conditions and increased equality. But here as production increases, the condition of the workers becomes worse and worse."

Then I mentioned my wife's case and pointed out that there was no cure for her in the Soviet Union, since the system itself tended to upset her and make her constantly worse. I insisted that the best thing for both of us was to go back to the United States.

"But, Comrade Smith," objected Brodskaya sweetly, "you seem to be an educated man. You are a good mechanic. You have received a position as an engineer in the factory. Do you mean to tell me that you should receive the same pay as an ignorant peasant who has just come from the village, where he lived among the cattle and the pigs? You want these backward workers to get as much as the more intelligent people? You want us to live as they do? How can you talk that way?"

"Not at all, Comrade Brodskaya," I replied vehemently, unmoved by her open flattery, but incensed by her evident contempt for the common people. "But I want no worker to live worse than I do. I do not want to live worse than you do. I do not want you to live worse than a Gay Payoo officer. And I do not want the Gay Payoo officers to live worse than the bureaucrats in the Kremlin. That is all."

Brodskaya shook her head in violent disagreement as I spoke. "Such fantastic ideas can never be realised," she said.

"Comrade Stalin has himself declared at the recent party *plenum* that even under Socialism everybody will not be equal. To-day, when we are building Socialism, everybody must be paid according to his knowledge and skill. When Socialism is realised then everybody will be compensated according to his needs. Even then some will get more and some will get less."

"I never learned such Socialism," I said. "Nor do I care for such a system. I am the enemy of such a system. It is worse than capitalism. I struggled all my life for a different kind of Socialism, for a Socialism under which all the workers will be happy and receive the full product of their labour.

"How can you defend a system under which the peasant raises wheat and is left to starve for want of a piece of bread? How can you justify a system under which the worker makes clothes in the factory and has nothing but rags to wear, while the bureaucrats dress well? I can look at such a system no longer. I am afraid we will not settle this question here. The best thing to do is give me permission to go back to the United States."

"Oh no, comrade. You are not going back. You live well here. You will be taken care of. We will never let you go to America. You are a good Communist and a good fighter. We need you here. If you disagree with what we are doing then fight for your opinion right now."

"You know very well that is impossible, Comrade Brodskaya. You know that oppositionists are shot in the Soviet Union. It is not like in America where the Communist Party has an opportunity to carry on its fight openly, where we have freedom of speech, Press and assembly. You know that any criticism or opposition directed against the policies of Stalin means certain death. It is impossible for me to live here. As far as Socialism is concerned, I think that we will have Socialism much sooner in America than in the Soviet Union."

"We would never hear of your going to America," insisted the old lady. "What will you do there in your old days?"

"Never mind that," I said, "so long as I am a free man."

"And what about your wife and her cure?" she asked.

I told her that I had just received a letter from my wife. "She does not like it among the painted madams in the Sanatorium. They go there for a good time, she writes me. They are not sick at all. It is a house of prostitution rather than a Sanatorium."

This was too much for Brodskaya. She shouted:

"You had better take care. Don't forget that you are in the office of the Moscow Party Committee."

"Yes, comrade, I know where I am, but I think it would be much better if I left."

"Very well," she said. "When you have seriously thought over what I have told you, you will realise that I am right and then you will be in a much better frame of mind."

"Yes, I will be in a much better frame of mind some day, but not here," I said as I departed.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### I MAKE NEW FRIENDS

A FEW days after the meeting at the Elektrozavod, I was walking through a corridor when I was suddenly seized by the shoulder. There was L——, another machinist. I had seen him many times at factory and party meetings but had never spoken to him.

He looked around carefully. Then he said, "Comrade Smith. You interest me very much. I admired your courage at the last meeting. In fact I am really astonished that you dare to speak so openly and boldly. I have heard many things about you. I think I know enough about you to rely upon your integrity. Let me shake your hand and greet you as a brave *nezlomniy* (unbreakable) incorruptible Communist."

We shook hands warmly. I rejoiced in the fact that at last I had met a party member who felt as I did, someone who was not a part of the crooked official bureaucracy. He asked me whether I intended to return to the United States.

"Certainly," I said. "Who the devil can stand for such a system as they have here? My nerves are shattered. My wife's condition is worse. They have buried Socialism for ever."

"I am glad to hear that you are returning to the United States. When you go back, be sure to tell the truth about what you have seen here. That much you can do for our long-suffering Russian people. Let the whole world know what is going on here. Do not be afraid. You are not alone in your fight. There are many who feel just as you do, many in the ranks of the Communist Party." He paused and glanced about him cautiously.

"Those of us who feel as you do, are organised, secretly of course, into a circle. There are circles like this all through the Soviet Union, of loyal comrades pledged to sacrifice their lives if need be, to fight the bureaucracy which is strangling our beloved country. By your courage and honesty, you have inspired us with confidence in you. We look upon you as a courageous defender of our poor, oppressed people and we wish to have you attend a meeting of our circle."

I was deeply moved at the earnestness of this comrade. His simple, straightforward words of confidence were like music in my ears. At last I had found someone whom I could trust and co-operate with. He gave me an address where I was to go on my next rest day, cautioning me at the same time, to go alone and to tell no one where I was going. He explained that at the address I would receive further directions and told me to bring a *sumka* (grocery bag), since we might go out picking mushrooms.

I waited anxiously until the next rest day came. I told my wife that I was going out picking mushrooms, took my *sumka*, and boarded a street car to the designated address. When I arrived there and entered the room, I was astonished to recognise the faces of a number of party members whom I knew very well at the factory.

With subdued enthusiasm they crowded around me, for under no circumstances could we permit ourselves to attract attention by any untoward noise. They shook my hand with feeling. "Now we have got you, Comrade Smith. For long we have been watching you. You are our man," they said.

We were then given instructions where to go. In order that I might not lose my way I was given a slip with the directions. We each left the house separately about five or ten minutes apart. I was to take a street car to a certain point and then walk to another point in the woods from which I would be directed to our rendezvous. As I rode on the trolley I saw one or two other members of the group, but we gave no sign that we knew each other. At the appointed place I was met

by another comrade, and after walking for over an hour in the thick woods, we arrived at the meeting place.

The spot was in the heart of the woods, near a tiny creek. We sat on the ground or upon tree trunks without ceremony. Around us the wild birds sang as Comrade L—— quietly opened the meeting. It was all so simple, so informal without bombast or oratory and yet they were all in such deadly earnest. Each one of us knew that the slightest betrayal meant certain death to all of us.

For the first time I felt completely at home in revolutionary Russia. It reminded me of our underground meetings during the hectic days of the Palmer raids in the United States. But these heroic men were running risks infinitely greater.

"Comrades," L—— began, "we have carried out the instructions of the last meeting. We have brought Comrade Smith here. Comrade Smith, you do not know us although we know you pretty well. I might as well tell you that if it were not for this group, you would have been finished long ago. You do not know what danger you have been in. You are lucky that you are still alive. Do you remember when you first arrived here, that your house was visited on your rest day by two suspicious-looking characters, who claimed that they wanted to fix the water pipes? They asked for you but luckily you were not at home. Your wife thought they were *juliky* (robbers). But these were no *juliky*, comrade. These were murderers hired by the bureaucrats to do away with you. If you had been at home they would have shot you like a dog. It was no accident that you were invited elsewhere."

"Then do you remember the time when you were approached by a number of high officials, the party secretary, the trade union secretary and an official from the Foreign Office, with the request that you go on a *commandirovka* (mission) to a Siberian *sovhoz*? They told you that your services as a skilled mechanic were badly needed there to repair the tractors and combines. They assured you of plenty of good food, supplies and living accommodations, if you would go. You refused. If you had accepted you would have disappeared forever, like

many others. They would have compelled you to go, but we succeeded in raising various objections that it would arouse suspicions in the Hungarian Club and in the Anglo-American Club, that you were too well known, that you still had an American passport and that it might cause foreign complications."

I remembered the incident of the fake plumber. My wife had told me the story but at the time I had attached little importance to it. I remembered also the strange insistence of the factory officials that I accept the *sovhoz* assignment. Yet I was sceptical of L——'s story. It sounded altogether too far-fetched. He must have read my thoughts on my face, for he continued, "You see this, comrade." Here he pointed to one member of the gathering. "He is a member of the Central Committee. Through him we are in direct touch with everything which goes on in that body. We know that the Central Committee looked upon you as a dangerous man. That was the report from the Communist International and it was understood that you were to be gotten rid of. We knew about the letter you sent to the United States. We had instructions to watch your every move."

Then I understood the veiled threat made by Comrade Peters in the office of the American Section of the Comintern. So this was to be my reward for all my efforts and activities. My wife's fears were apparently too well grounded.

I remembered also my strange meeting with Wagenknecht on Foreigners' Day, in 1934, at the Central Park of Culture, in Moscow. I knew him from the old days in the Socialist Party of the United States for a number of years. He looked well-fed and healthy. I asked him what he was doing in Moscow and he told me he was there for a cure. Then he asked me, "How is your case getting along?"

"What case do you mean?" I asked. He flushed with embarrassment and hastened to change the subject. Now I understood what "case" he had referred to.

At this point L—— asked me how the party had discovered my opinions so quickly. Then I explained that we had career-

ists in the American Communist Party also. I told him the story of my letter to Zatko and Sipka's betrayal. At this moment I realised that in my confidence in the good faith and integrity of the party leadership I had overplayed my hand. By expressing my opinions too openly and sharply I had thus exposed myself too quickly to the party bureaucracy. "You must advise me, comrades," I said, "as to what I should do now. I realise that my life hangs in the balance. My wife is constantly worried about me. I cannot quiet her. Shall I drop my party membership? Or shall I take advantage of American recognition and tell my story to the American Ambassador when he comes here? I need your help."

Comrade K— took it upon himself to reply, "You are certainly in a tight place. We understand your position. You have made many serious mistakes and it is difficult to correct them now. My opinion is that it would be much worse for you to drop your membership in the party. You should know that many times at secret committee meetings there have been serious efforts to have you expelled. However, the factory committee and the party committee would not agree. It was thought more advisable to try to win your confidence by means of special privileges and honours, at the same time hiding their sinister designs against you. Of course you did not understand how our machine works here. If you drop your party membership now, they will realise that it is impossible to buy your silence and they will surely resort to other methods. Their action against a renegade would be justified by the party propagandists. You must not give them the opportunity. It is therefore my opinion that you should not leave the party." The rest of the members of the circle nodded in approval of K—'s remarks.

"As to your visit to the American Consul," he continued, "by all means do that. But be very careful that you are not seen by anyone who knows you. That would be disastrous. You might as well know that very soon all foreign workers in the factory will be called to a special meeting. They will be notified that they must drop their foreign citizenship and take

out Russian citizenship papers. While others are being called to this meeting, it is actually intended against you. 'But you hold the trump cards since you have your passport and citizenship papers, which I hope you will take good care of. We will all be happy if you get out of the Soviet Union safely. We know you will do good work in the United States, and that you will do all you can on behalf of the Russian proletariat. Our advice to you is to rejoin the American Communist Party when you get there. You must work diligently among the American party members and explain how Stalin has buried the principles of Leninism. We know it will be hard, for the Russian party will notify them of your record here, but do your best. Speak out boldly. We know we can depend upon you to do your best on behalf of the downtrodden Russian people."

Comrade K—— continued with his remarks, which had evidently been planned as the chief business of the meeting. "Comrade Smith, you must take better care of yourself from now on. Never walk anywhere alone. Be careful of what you eat. You know how many cases there are where one among a large number of workers is suddenly seized with strange convulsions. Such cases are not always accidental. You were very wise in not eating at the banquet following the last meeting. Be careful of your associates. Have nothing to do with B——, the Hungarian-American. He is secretly working against you. So is F——. Then there is S——, who has informed about you many times. He is trying to win his way into the party. These people are never occupied with anything in particular. They have no technical skill. They are paid simply to spy on the others." Then he gave me the names of those other comrades who were not present in whom I could place full confidence.

I thought I would utilise the opportunity to clarify myself on other matters which had often troubled me. "Do you think that there will be a turn for the better soon in the Soviet Union?" I asked. "There can be no turn for the better until something breaks out," Comrade K—— replied. "I mean a

war, in which case the present régime is bound to collapse. Only when the present bureaucracy has been thoroughly cleaned out as a result of a war with some other power, only then can we hope for any improvement in the economic and political life of our country."

But Comrade K—— was not to be turned aside from his chief object, which was to guide me in my conduct for the future. He continued, "I hope you will understand how our machine works now and act accordingly. I hope that you will appreciate why we must work under cover and sometimes under false colours. We are surrounded everywhere by spies." He mentioned at what machines some of the most notorious spies were stationed. "Sometimes these people will adopt a very strong anti-administration tone and will utter loud protests against certain evils. You should not be deceived by them for they are nothing but *provocateurs* working for the Gay Payoo. As soon as they become too well known, a new gang takes their places. They travel about as technical students, ostensibly to study industrial technique. These creatures rarely attend party meetings, so that they may remain inconspicuous. They hold their own meetings in secret. We know how to defend ourselves against them. But you do not, so take warning. Watch us. See how we act. Never talk to us openly. If you notice anything important get in touch with us secretly and if we have anything to tell you we will get in touch with you in the same way. Sometimes we will criticise you sharply. Just ignore that. But take careful heed of those who support you. Nine chances out of ten they are your enemies."

My only regret was that I had not received this sound advice when I first arrived in the Soviet Union. He went on, "Soon a party cleaning will take place in your department. All the foreign workers will be included in one group for the cleaning. But you will not be among them. You are going to be placed among the Russians in a small out-of-the-way section of the factory, where there is little danger of your poisoning the minds of other party members. Of course it would be much better if they threw you out of the party. Then perhaps you

would find it easier to return to the United States. But I am afraid they will not do this. At any rate when the party cleaning comes, speak out boldly before the committee, especially on political questions. We will see what will happen and inform you. They must act with the advice of the party committee anyway, so we will know what is going on."

It was already growing dark, so the meeting was adjourned. One by one we quietly slipped away in different directions. When I got home with my empty *sumka*, my wife looked at me questioningly. I rambled off a long story about the mushrooms being wormy and not much good anyhow. My wife was frankly sceptical and assured me that the next time I went off for the day, she would go along. She was in constant fear for my safety. Her neighbour Freda, who was in the house when I arrived, jokingly inquired whether I had been off to see my sweetheart. Seeing that my mushroom story did not register, I remained uncommunicative.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### THE PARTY CLEANING

THE practice of party cleaning, or *chistka*, had been established under Lenin as a means of getting rid of careerists who had filtered into the party during its ascent to power and also to eliminate backward elements or deadwood, which impeded the progress of the organisation.

In 1933, I not only had the opportunity of witnessing one of these party cleanings in operation, but, in addition, I had the privilege of participating personally in one of them. I found that the very evils which these cleanings were originally meant to abolish, were perpetuated a hundredfold by the methods now in vogue. The cleanings were, in fact, nothing more or less than an effort on the part of the ruling party bureaucracy to get rid of all opposition or protesting elements and thus strengthen their own hold upon the reins of power.

In the summer of 1933, reports reached Moscow of serious trouble in the Ukraine. There were stories of strikes and sabotage on the sovhozi and the mines, and of damaging accidents on the railroads. There were rumours of serious differences with Stalin's policies. Party leaders of the Ukraine were removed. Skrypnik, Vice-President of the Council of People's Commissars, it was said, had committed suicide.

Following these reports, the full weight of the party machinery was thrown into a nation-wide drive to eliminate all opposition cliques. This was the chief object of the party cleaning. The Press, the radio and placards in every factory called upon party members and non-party individuals alike to co-operate in eliminating undesirable elements.

The declared purpose of the purge was, first of all, to test the party members in their knowledge of party policy and

tactics, the principles of party discipline and the history of the Russian Party. Study circles were established in the various departments of the factory, and special ones for the various shifts.

There was a circle in the Red Corner in our apartment house. There were circles in the Hungarian Club and the Anglo-American Club. A hysterical rush for these study circles swept through the ranks of the party, especially among those who felt their positions at all insecure. I attended three of them sometimes two a day, when I was not occupied with meetings. I was extremely anxious to see how the party members were prepared for this momentous trial.

One evening I attended a session of the circle of the OTK (Department of Technical Control). They met every evening from about five until eight o'clock. Comrade Kingsberg, the party secretary of the department, was the instructor. He had given a reading assignment the day before—some articles in the *Pravda* and some pages of party history—and the class was supposed to be prepared to answer the following question, "What should a Communist know?" About thirty men and women were present.

Kingsberg called upon Ostromov, a man of about thirty-five, a brigadier in the department, to answer. This is what he said:

"Every Communist should know how to be a dictator. Every Communist should know how to control the non-party workers."

There was a roar of laughter from the class. Kingsberg's face grew red as a beet with anger. Ostromov had blundered terribly—by telling the truth in his own way.

"Why didn't you study your assignment for to-night instead of coming here with such stupid answers?" demanded Kingsberg.

"When shall I study, comrade?" Ostromov answered. "I have to work from eight to four. Our class last to eight at night. Then I have to go to the *oc* line) until about midnight."

"Well, you must find the time somehow," snapped the instructor.

Ostromov was an efficient loyal worker, despite his political deficiencies. He was not a dangerous element or an oppositionist. He passed the cleaning successfully, despite his laughable blunders.

I was next to be called upon. "What is the duty of our *yatcheka* (department cell of the party)?" asked Kingsberg.

"In my opinion," I replied, "our *yatcheka* should see to it that every party member does honest work and gives up all privileges. No party member should enjoy better food or conditions than those not in the party. It seems to me that the majority of the party members are interested more in their own personal advancement than in the advancement of Leninism. They join the party to get more money and better treatment. According to my way of thinking, if we did away with all privileges, we would not need any party cleaning to get rid of the careerists. Then we would have a party of honest idealists."

My answer was a bombshell. Kingsberg had no reply ready, so he adjourned the class hurriedly. The next day he hastened to inform Kulakov, then party secretary of the ATE. I received a report of the interview from a worker who happened to be present.

Kulakov told Kingsberg not to bother with me, and not to call me to any more sessions. I was to attend the circle intended for the foreign workers.

The actual cleanings began at the Elektrozavod in October and lasted for fully four months. Every day from four to six names were posted on the bulletin boards, throughout the factory, as the candidates for the *chistka* for that evening. All workers were invited to be present, party and non-party, especially those from the same department as the candidate, so that they might testify as to the fitness of the candidate under nomination.

Officials who feared for their security would oftentimes extend special privileges to the workers of the departments on such occasions, in order to insure themselves against any con-

demnation at the public hearing. Of course, it should be understood that the big shots, those really responsible for the formulation and execution of policy, never appeared for a party cleaning.

The workers were sceptical of the effectiveness of the cleanings against the real careerists, for they knew that these elements ran the show. They characterised the whole thing as a "circus." But when some honest comrade was to be victimised they turned out *en masse* and often showed great courage in expressing their sympathy for him. For me the sessions were extremely interesting and I attended as many as I could.

One evening Comrade Belov, a technical inspector of about forty, was called before the examining committee. He was asked the following questions:

"What are you doing to fill out the programme? What are you doing in order to eliminate any possibility of wasting time in the factory, in order that the Soviet Union may get four hundred and twenty minutes of work out of your seven hours in the factory? What are you doing beside your work in the factory? How much work have you done in the last *subotnik*? In what organisations are you active?"

Belov stepped to the microphone and boosted his own stocks to the skies before the audience of several hundred workers. The workers who worked under him, listened in silence. No one dared to take issue with his eulogy. Then he was asked to give his idea of Fascism. In his reply he linked up with the White Guards and the oppositionists in the Soviet Union.

"What is the Comintern?" was the next question. "A radio station," replied the inspector as a roar of laughter swept the hall. "And who is Comrade Stalin?" he was asked. Belov replied that Stalin was the President of the Soviet Republic. "What is the Profintern (Red Trade Union International)?" "I never heard of it. I think it is some opposition organisation," answered Belov.

Although Belov had displayed remarkable ignorance, he was passed by the committee later, since he was a loyal member of the ruling clique.

The hearings on the case of Comrade Koslov aroused considerable interest. He was the manager of the Co-operative Store of the lamp factory. He had passed the first cleaning successfully, when it was found that there were a number of serious complaints against him. The charges were that he had refused to sell the better products to the workers, that, instead, he had reserved them for himself and had sold them for his own profit to speculators, that he was not of a worker's family, and that his antecedents were White Guards.

Koslov was called to a second cleaning. He defended himself with dignity and ability. He presented documentary proof to refute the charges. He showed his account books. He showed his papers proving that his brother had been in the Red Army and had fought the White Guards. He demanded the names of those who made the charges, and that they face him before the committee. This was refused. He charged openly that there was a frame-up against him by his enemies.

My sympathies were aroused by Koslov's case. As he left the hall I approached him. He knew me from party meetings.

"How do you explain what happened at the hearing, Comrade Koslov?" I asked.

"They are trying to frame me up," replied Koslov dejectedly. "It is no use. I do not fit in the Communist Party, because I refuse to be dishonest and selfish. Day and night I have been fighting the bureaucracy in the various trusts for better products for the workers who patronise our co-operative. The only answer I get is that these products are intended for the Gay Payoo and the better paid departments. I have no time for party meetings. I spend my time running around trying to get cheap products for the workers. Meanwhile, those people are cooking up a conspiracy in order to get one of the members of the clique into my place."

A few weeks later Koslov was dropped from the party. Knowing that he was waging a losing fight against impossible odds, he resigned his position as manager.

"The Communist Party," I replied.

But these replies were, of course, not what Naumov wanted and he demanded that I explain. I went on:

"You call the elections in the Soviet Union democratic, but they are not democratic at all. There are never any opposition candidates. The candidates are selected by the party and the workers are forced to vote for them since there is no other choice. The workers vote by a show of hands and they are carefully watched and penalized if they fail to vote. This is not democracy. This is absolutism and bureaucratic dictatorship."

There was not a sound when I gave my answers. The workers did not dare give any indication of sympathy with my remarks. Nevertheless, they followed every word with rapt attention. Naumov resolved to try another tack. "Will there be a revolution in the United States soon?" he asked.

"I don't think so," I said. "I know you will throw me out for what I am going to say, but it is the truth. Many American workers own their own automobiles. Many of them dress well and eat well. They do not have so many categories as you have in the Soviet Union. Even the unemployed live better in the United States than the workers do in the Soviet Union."

"What?" exclaimed Naumov in astonishment. "You would have us believe that there is no starvation in the United States?"

"There is not starvation like there is in the Soviet Union," I said. "The Russian people would be happy to eat the bread that the American workers, and even the unemployed, throw into the garbage pail. If we had conditions in the United States like those in the Soviet Union there would be an American revolution."

The grilling had lasted for two hours. Nobody left the hall throughout the proceedings. Naumov now called for those who wanted to speak against me to step up to the microphone. Two men stepped forward. One was Petrov, an old man of about fifty, but exceedingly robust and strong. He was a

notorious bureaucrat who was often sent out to the *kolkhozi* to enforce discipline when any trouble arose. The other was Kaminski, a young student in the technical school and a brother of the Soviet Health Commissar.

Petrov worked himself up into a fever of excitement. "It makes my blood boil to hear the disgusting remarks of Comrade Smith. I don't believe he has the viewpoint of a worker. He talks like a bourgeois. One day, for instance, I invited him to eat with me in the workers' restaurant, and what did he reply? 'I am not a pig. The pigs would refuse to eat what the workers have to eat in the Soviet Union.' He is against the Soviet Union, and I demand that he be expelled from the party."

Kaminski said he was present when I made the remarks mentioned by Petrov. There were no others who desired to speak against me.

Naumov then asked who wanted to speak for Smith. Many workers raised their hands, but only six were given the floor. They testified to the high quality of my work in the factory and my efforts to improve production. Nazarbeckov, assistant technical director, was the last speaker. He opposed my expulsion vigorously. He said, "I wish all party members were like him." Only then, for the first time in the meeting, was there a burst of applause.

As was the custom I was given an opportunity to reply to my critics. All I said was:

"Everything that Petrov and Kaminski quoted me as saying was true. I will not eat in the workers' restaurant as long as you do not serve better food there. Why don't *you* eat there?" I asked, turning to the members of the examining commission who were seated on the platform. At this point I heard one of the examiners whisper to Naumov, "He is actually trying to provoke us to expel him."

Three weeks later came the report of the commission. About seventeen per cent. of the party members were expelled as unfit, for one reason or another. In my case there were the following remarks:

"Complaints were lodged against Comrade Smith for refusal to eat in the workers' restaurant. We cannot expect Comrade Smith to eat in our restaurant. He is not used to conditions here, since he comes from America. We must make allowances for the fact that he has not yet adapted himself to conditions in the Soviet Union. This does not mean, however, that Comrade Smith is not a good Communist."

The strategy of the party bureaucracy toward me had evidently not changed.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### ANOTHER SECRET MEETING

IN April, 1934, Comrade L—— came to my home to notify me of another meeting to be held at the home of Comrade P——. He told me that I would hear some good news.

On the appointed evening we crowded into the room of Comrade P——, forty of us in all. Among them were two Red soldiers from the Eastern front, B—— from Khabarovsk and S—— from Aleksandrovski. L—— opened the meeting introducing the two Red soldiers, whom I had never met before. We all recognised the decisive rôle of the armed forces in the struggle against the Stalin machine. Hence we were very anxious to hear what the two soldiers had to say. They were asked to report on the feeling in the army as far as the opposition was concerned and also the prospects in the event of an outbreak of some kind.

Comrade B—— reported on the situation in Khabarovsk. "Our boys are making definite progress in spite of the strict discipline and the great caution which is necessary to carry on our activities. We have to pose as the most enthusiastic patriots of course. We use every opportunity to voice our loyalty to Stalin and our hatred of Japan. In fact we are doing everything possible to provoke Japan to action. But our officers hold us in check. Evidently those are orders from above. Even if the Japanese openly violate all rules of neutrality, our officers act with the utmost restraint, preferring to retreat in the face of repeated and most flagrant Japanese provocations rather than to take any chance of an armed conflict. Instead of any resistance on the part of our forces, the officers send in report after report to Moscow. Meanwhile,

nothing is done. For this reason I believe that war will start sooner on the European front than in the East. For example, take the case of the Russian officers murdered recently on the Chinese Eastern Railroad by the Japanese. Instead of doing something about this, the Government is trying to sell the railroad for almost nothing. That is how they try to solve the problem.

"But this policy of retreat does no good. The Japanese simply increase their provocation. In view of the Soviet policy of retreat and non-resistance I would not be surprised if the Japanese soon take all of Eastern Siberia as far as Lake Baikal and onward to Novo-Sibirsk. Our men want to fight, especially when the provocation is strong, but the officers hold us back and try to quiet us down.

"The officers do not give any good reason for their policy. We are of the opinion that they feel the ferment in the ranks and fear the consequences of an armed conflict. I don't believe that they have definite information as to our activities but they just suspect what is going on.

"You know how difficult it is for you to carry on your work in the factory because of the numerous straw bosses, propagandists and spies and because they keep the workers constantly occupied with meetings of all kinds, giving you hardly a moment's freedom. Well it is much more difficult in the army. We are kept busy day and night. When we do not have meetings, they keep us busy with entertainments. We can never go anywhere alone. We must always travel in groups and always accompanied by either an officer, a propagandist or some official connected with the political department.

"But I know something will happen soon. One of our comrades had a conversation with a Japanese officer recently. This officer was of the opinion that the Soviet Union cannot avoid a war. You would be surprised how well acquainted he was with internal conditions in our country. He told me frankly that the Japanese are not afraid of the Bolsheviks because they know that the people are dissatisfied and just waiting for some change to come."

Comrade S—— took the floor to report on the situation in Aleksandrovski. "Our conditions are very much like those at Khabarovsk. But our soldiers are more dissatisfied and more revolutionary. There are good reasons for this. Most of our soldiers come from the villages. These young peasant lads are well acquainted with the horrible conditions in the agricultural areas. They resent the expropriation and starvation of their own people and the complete abolition of all civil rights in the villages. Besides, our food is not as good as that in Khabarovsk. I believe I do not exaggerate when I say that at least fifty per cent. of the soldiers are with us. Last year we succeeded in holding six secret meetings in spite of the cunning tactics of the Stalinists. If something breaks out it is my opinion that eighty per cent. of the soldiers at Aleksandrovski will be with us. In the event of a war, the Stalin dictatorship will collapse."

Then Comrade L—— took up my question. "I hope that Comrade Smith will be back in the United States soon, where he will be able to help us. At the last meeting of the Moscow District Committee, there was considerable discussion of Smith's letter to the Central Committee. The various party secretaries were of the opinion that they could not hold him back from going to America. Wikkukel, who acted as a spy, reported that Smith has very strong connections among the foreign workers and that any action against him might have dangerous results among them. He pointed out that Smith was an influential member of the Hungarian Club, the Anglo-American Club and the Slovakian Club, that foreign workers were constantly visiting at Smith's home. He said Smith had the foreign workers with him. He also mentioned that Smith was reporting to the American Consul. 'He is turning the foreign workers against the party,' said Wikkukel. 'He is a very dangerous man. I think we should not make it difficult for him to return to America. To hell with him. At least we shall be rid of him.'

"At this point someone asked Wikkukel if he had not asked for permission to go to Czechoslovakia sometime ago. When he admitted that this was true, there was a furious attack upon

him. It was charged that he was even worse than Smith. That shut him up for the rest of the evening.

"Further complaints were made against Smith by Gisella Heinz, a worker in the coil department and Santo, teacher of the Hungarian political circle. They charged him with disrupting the circle and inciting the workers against the party. They urged that the party take him under disciplinary care. Polkin, secretary of the *ATE*, also called attention to Smith's connections with the American Consul. Liberov, the instructor of the foreign bureau, urged that action be immediately taken against Smith, because of his continued struggle against the party.

"But the general opinion was that Smith should be handled carefully—like an egg—that was the expression they used. The comrades should not antagonize him because if they do, it will be much worse when he gets back to the United States. On the other hand, it was pointed out, if he is well treated, he may keep quiet when he gets back, particularly if he finds conditions in the United States to be very bad. Perhaps we will be able to get him a position in the party. That is how they planned to keep Smith's mouth shut. In the meantime the plan is to treat Smith royally and promise him everything. But if you believe these promises, Comrade Smith, you are lost."

Next we heard a report from Comrade D—— who had just returned from the Ukraine. "There is a strong revolutionary ferment among the people and even among the partisans (Non-party fighters against White Guards), and old Bolsheviks. The Stalinists feel that something is in the air but they do not know what to do. The sentiment against the party is growing stronger every day. Soon they will abolish the bread cards and the cereal cards. Although this step is intended to lighten the burden of the peasantry and enable them to buy more bread for their products, yet it cannot wipe out their bitter hostility to the Stalin regime because they cannot forget the past and because the hunger and misery will not be done away with anyway."

Not a moment was wasted at the meeting in useless oratory or gossip. The chairman then informed us that the Central

Committee would soon issue an order to every factory, for the establishment of collective gardens which the workers are to cultivate on their rest day. This measure was intended to counteract a serious food shortage which was expected. L— declared that this expedient would not improve the situation for the *kolkhozi* would thus be deprived of the labour of the factory workers who went out on the subotniks (days of voluntary labour).

L— mentioned also the new order from the Central Committee setting aside more goods for Moscow and the other big cities. At the same time the price of the goods is to be raised, so that only the highly paid employee can buy them. This, he said, will create increased dissatisfaction among the great mass of poorly paid workers.

He reported briefly on the foreign policy of the Soviet Union and its *rapprochement* with France. "But the French people will not be fools," he added. "They will not be led around by the nose by Stalin."

Considerable dissatisfaction had been evident, though not openly expressed, at the District Committee meeting according to L—. It was chiefly directed against the abolition of the bread card system and the shortage of goods in the workers' shops as against the abundance displayed in the Government stores frequented by the higher categories. The abolition of the bread card system would mean that the workers would not have the protection against high prices which the factory co-operative stores afforded them. They would have to pay the high prices of the open market.

We had covered an enormous amount of business and it was already late. The meeting was adjourned and we departed one after another, in the same cautious manner that we had come together.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE KIROV ASSASSINATION

I WAS busily occupied with my usual inspection tour of the factory on December 1st, when, like a bolt from the sky, the factory radio announced the assassination of Kirov, member of the all-powerful Political Bureau. According to the first announcement the perpetrator of the crime was a White Guardist, named Nikolaev. The deed had been committed at the Leningrad headquarters of the party. Management, party members and workers alike were dumbfounded.

At first a curious quiet settled upon the workers. Everyone was afraid to comment although the bare facts passed with lightning speed throughout the factory. Gradually, however, the first shock wore off and one could hear occasional comments in the toilets, the corridors, or, as I passed from one machine to another. Some smiled significantly to each other, when they were sure they were not being observed by the propagandists. Everybody was on edge as if they expected something even more momentous to take place. One worker said to me, "Did you hear what happened? You will hear *more* later, just wait and see." Another assured me that "Something will happen soon." A machine hand named Vassil even went so far as to say to me, "It would have been much better if it had been Stalin instead of Kirov."

The discipline of the factory was badly shaken. The workers were unusually sensitive and showed keen resentment when the straw bosses endeavoured to ride them as was their custom. The propagandists, straw bosses, party members and the bureaucracy in general scurried back and forth with worried faces. No doubt they were badly scared by the sheer audacity

of the assassination, and the possibility of future terroristic acts against others. They did not know where the lightning might strike next. They did not seem to know what to do, in the absence of information and instructions from headquarters, and showed visible evidences of extreme panic.

On the second day, the radio and the Press announced that Nikolaev was a young Communist, a member of a terrorist group, acting under the influence of the Zinoviev and Kamenev opposition. The administration did not, however, charge this group with direct responsibility for the crime.

The effect upon some of those who were known as grumbler against the party and dissatisfied elements, was instantaneous. They bowed sagaciously before the approaching storm. They changed colour immediately, vigorously denouncing the deed, its perpetrator and the opposition, and expressed their deepest sympathy for Kirov.

On December 3rd every party member in the plant was instructed to attend the party meeting. The air was electric with excitement as the comrades took their seats. Up front the leaders sat with stern anxious faces. Something desperate would have to be done to meet the situation. Of that we were all certain.

Comrade Jurov appealed to the party members for their utmost co-operation in this critical moment.

"You must know, comrades," he exclaimed, banging the table excitedly, "that all our party leaders are in danger. In this critical hour every party member must be at his post!"

"Our beloved comrade Kirov was murdered by a young Communist, one of the best members of the party and Komsomols. Now he has become the tool of our enemies who want to destroy the Soviet Union. We must face the truth, comrades. Among the Komsomols we have many Nikolaevs. I am sorry to say also that even among some of the old revolutionists such people are to be found. The reason for this is that these elements do not understand the situation and the difficulties of building Socialism in one country. They do not understand that the workers must make sacrifices and that they will have to suffer in order that we may accomplish our great task."

His speech brought me a great deal of consolation, for evidently there were others, even among the old revolutionists, who did not seem to understand why things had to be as they were in the Soviet Union. I am not alone, I thought to myself. I seem to be in pretty good company.

"Our enemies," shouted Jurov, "are using our shortcomings and our difficulties as a means of destroying our party and our Stalinist leadership. These people are organised for the purpose of murdering our leading comrades. But they will never succeed for we will destroy them before they can destroy us."

Tumultuous applause greeted this fierce threat. As the applause subsided he continued:

"To meet this critical situation it is necessary that every party member do his best to track down all oppositionists and all untrustworthy elements. Our loyal *cadres* must mingle with the workers everywhere and at all times to search out their opinions and report them to the proper party authorities. We must have eyes and ears everywhere. Every one of you must begin right now and write out a list of names of workers from whom you have heard, at any time, remarks which are suspicious. This list must be in the party office within ten days. Remember, you must act decisively and mercilessly for we are facing a dangerous movement, which must be rooted out at all costs. Our enemies are not sleeping, and they are well organised to carry on their vicious counter-revolutionary work."

In other words, the leaders of the party, as was clear from Jurov's report, had become so insanely hysterical in their fear and panic, that all they could think of to meet the situation, was to whip up an insidious campaign of general spying and tale-bearing among the workers in their desperate effort to exterminate their enemies. They were to find, however, as we shall see later, that this weapon was two-edged, and that its ultimate effect was far from advantageous to the ruling bureaucracy.

Comrade Jurov concluded:

"We must locate every member of the Zinoviev group and all those who were ever connected with it. We must send

them where they belong, to a place from which they will never come back. Your first test will come at the Kirov funeral. Remember, no worker must remain at the factory, or in his home. Everyone must be there. You must check up on everybody. The streets of Moscow must be filled with people to demonstrate our condemnation of the murder of our Comrade Kirov and our undying loyalty to our beloved Comrade Stalin. We shall know how to deal with those who fail to come."

Thus the ground was prepared to insure a maximum turn-out of the people of Moscow in order to impress the outside world with the unshakable stability of the Stalin regime.

When Jurov had finished, many party members asked for the floor. The lead had been given and the bloodhounds were in full cry. Each in turn followed the line laid down by Jurov in bitter denunciation of the opposition and demand for swift retribution. I was amazed to hear speaker after speaker of our opposition group take the floor. Outdoing all the rest in the bitterness of their attacks upon Nikolaev, Zinoviev and the oppositionists in general, and their demand for the most ruthless measures against them.

"We know how to act," they had often assured me. I had to confess that they surely did, to the utter confusion of the Stalinists.

The funeral of Kirov took place in the afternoon of December 6th. The urn containing his ashes had in the meantime been transported to Leningrad and back.

I was in the Safety Guard. With an unloaded rifle at my shoulder I was stationed on the Central Square near the Dom Soyuzov (House of the Trade Unions) from which the funeral procession was to start. The Safety Guard consisted of six solid rows of men guarding the street on each side, from the Dom Soyuzov to the Red Square—two rows of picked Communist Red Army officers, two rows of picked Communist officers from the militia, and two rows of picked Communist shock workers from the factories. I was included in the last group.

Promptly at three o'clock the solemn procession started on its way. The street had been strewn with soft, fine, white sand. First came the Red Army band playing a funeral march. Several cars banked high with flowers followed. Then came Stalin, Voroshilov, Kalinin and Molotoff, and then the other members of the Central Committee carrying the ashes of Kirov in an urn surrounded by flowers. As a precautionary measure, I noticed at every window on the Central Square and on the Red Square, a soldier stationed with a machine gun.

The Central Committee was followed by row upon row of Commissars, party secretaries, officials, propagandists, directors and technicians, after which came the Red Army with its tanks and cannon and its airplanes manœuvring overhead. It was a tremendous and impressive turn out. But where were the workers?

In accordance with the orders issued to each factory, the workers had marched toward the Red Square, a million strong. The brigadiers and propagandists responsible for each ten or fifteen workers had checked them scrupulously. With but few exceptions, the workers did not get within a mile of the Red Square and they had no means of witnessing the procession. They stood packed like sardines in the crowded streets while amplifiers carried to them the details of the funeral. I was lucky enough to be able to squeeze myself into the Red Square as soon as my Safety Guard duty was over.

For three hours the speakers harangued the crowd from the microphones on the Lenin Mausoleum. The keynote of the speeches was, "Down with Zinoviev and the oppositionists. The oppositionists must die. They are the enemies of the working class." And beside me I heard a worker mutter "Down with the enemies of the working class who are on the Lenin Mausoleum." Although the crowds applauded obediently at the appropriate moments, there was little to disclose their innermost feelings as they stood there.

When the funeral exercises were completed at about six o'clock, there was the most terrible jam that I have ever witnessed. When the workers attempted to start for their homes,

each one desiring to go in a different direction, they found themselves helplessly wedged together and unable to move in any direction. Then the street cars which had been held up during the parade began to wade through the mass of humanity, with passengers clinging on all sides. There were shrieks and groans everywhere as the workers shoved, cursed and trampled each other in hopeless confusion. Many were hurt, but the newspapers made no mention of the fact. I hugged a doorway on the Red Square for hours until the jam had loosened up and I could find my way home.

The next day the man-hunt began. Some workers suddenly disappeared overnight having been apprehended by the Gay Payoo at their homes. Among them was my friend Vassil, the machine hand from the repair gang. Two men disappeared from the tool department. Nobody asked any questions for everybody understood what was happening.

We witnessed only one arrest at the factory, that of Sonya of the lamp department. Who was this Sonya? She was a young girl of about twenty, who had not the faintest notion of what was meant by the opposition or the significance of Zinoviev or Nikolaev. She was utterly ignorant of all political questions. But her sufferings had crushed her completely. A propagandist had approached her and informed her about the death of Kirov. She shrugged her shoulders hopelessly and had answered: "Perhaps he is better off." That remark had sealed poor Sonya's doom. She was taken away in the evening by the black Gay Payoo wagon, no one knows where.

The week after the funeral I was called in to Jurov's office. I had sent in my second application for return to America, voicing the sharpest criticism of conditions in the Soviet Union, but basing my request mainly upon my wife's illness. A number of other secretaries were present in the office at the time.

Jurov spoke:

"How can you make such a request at this time? You must not bother us any more with this business. Our big job now is to fight the opposition. How can you think of this now?"

Don't you realise that the Central Committee will think that we have Zinovievists among the foreign workers when they hear of your request? Forget about it, will you?"

I took the application, folded it and put it into my coat pocket. As I was leaving Jurov's office I ran into L—— again in the corridor. I explained what had just happened to me. "You let them off too easily," he exclaimed chidingly. "You must present your application again as soon as possible."

"How is the group getting along?" I asked anxiously. "Did they succeed in arresting any of our comrades?"

L—— laughed scornfully and replied:

"The idiots did not get one of us. They succeeded only in getting hold of a few innocent but discontented workers who are totally ignorant of political questions. They had been victimised for some unwitting remark they may have made at some time in the past. Among them were twenty-two Komsomols who had not the faintest idea of the meaning of right or left wing, or oppositionist."

"Jurov instructed every party member to report someone," I said. "Did you report anyone?"

"Oh yes," he said, chuckling under his breath, "we gave in many names. You can just imagine what names we turned in. Every one of the dirty spies, stool-pigeons, and crooks hanging around the factory we turned in as the most dangerous elements. You see we know how to work."

A word of explanation is necessary here. It should be understood that the various understrappers and lickspittles constituting the official bureaucracy, were by no means Simon-pure Bolsheviks. Many of them were descended from aristocratic parents or from wealthy farmers. They had managed to falsify their pedigree and thus enter the ranks of the Communist bureaucracy. The practice had become so wide-spread that the Government found it necessary to have the long biography blanks filled out every few months, in order to check the answers with those made previously. Some were exposed in this way. Others were uncovered by the Gay Payoo after investigating the city or village of their claimed origin. The

confusion created by the complaints lodged against these people, whose records could not afford any real examination, can well be imagined.

L—— continued :

"Complaints have been turned in against Poze and Kislich, two German workers. But they don't dare do anything about them for fear of trouble with Hitler. You were also turned in by somebody. But they will do nothing about the complaints against you. They will still try to keep you here. They think you are just an excitable individual, unsophisticated on political questions, and not fundamentally dangerous. They believe they can cure you in time. Meanwhile you must push your application without delay. If the matter comes up at a party meeting, remember that we will not hesitate to attack you. We will even attack you before the non-party workers, as a dangerous character. But don't worry about that. We will thus give you the opening you are looking for, to free yourself from the chains which bind you here. Keep on the alert and watch for your opportunity."

With this he was gone and I was left to ponder on my future strategy.

## CHAPTER XL

### I QUIT THE PARTY

ACTING upon the advice of L—— I addressed another letter to the party early in January, 1935, again requesting the right to return to America. My wife's condition was getting worse. Hence, I was determined to leave at all costs, through party channels if possible, and if not, then I had made up my mind to appeal to the American Consul for help. My letter was so worded as to force a decision one way or the other.

DEAR COMRADES (I wrote), My endurance is at an end. My nerves are breaking down under the strain of my life in the Soviet Union. I can no longer witness what is going on here. I can no longer view the great injustice, the great inequality and the great selfishness which is all about me. It is impossible for me to work here any longer.

You must take my wife's condition into consideration. She might die here as a result of the terrible tax upon her nerves. Such a loyal and devoted revolutionist as my wife does not deserve such an end. It is not worthy of a workers' country.

I insist that the party place no more difficulties in the way of our return to America, and that we get a pass immediately. It has been clear for a long time that the party is not satisfied with me anyhow. You know very well that I do not agree with the party's policies. Why cover up this matter and try to hide it? You call me a good Communist when you know very well that I do not agree with the kind of Communism which you have here. You have received many complaints that I am agitating among the foreigners against the party. Then why hold me back? Why not let me go back to the United States and settle this question once for all? I cannot understand why you do not grant my request.

I positively demand that the party take this matter up as soon as possible. You know that the Foreign Department will not grant me a visa without the approval of the party. I appeal to you to take up this question immediately since I am through with the Soviet Union.

It was not until February 2nd that Yefremov, our party group secretary, informed me that I must be present at the party meeting at 8 p.m. in the main office of the *OTK*, when my case would be taken up. I could not understand why I was called so late, since such meetings were usually held right after quitting time. But when I passed through the corridor I noticed that the leading party officials were gathered in the party offices for a secret, preliminary meeting behind closed doors. I made up my mind that I was going to fight as I had never fought before to get what I was after. They can do me nothing, I figured, except brand me as a counter-revolutionist, which did not worry me in the least, provided I got my freedom.

At about 8.10 the secret meeting ended and the leaders filed out of the party office to open the meeting. There were about one hundred present, all party members of the *ATE* tool department. Polkin, the party secretary of the *ATE* factory, was the chairman. He was a little man, deeply impressed with his own importance, who was constantly bustling up and down like a cockroach. Near him on the platform was a stenographer, indicating the unusual character of the meeting.

Polkin began by reading my letter. When he had finished he denounced the document as a counter-revolutionary ultimatum to the party. He no longer called me "Comrade."

"For three years," he declared, "we have had trouble with Smith. How many times have we tried to convince him about our difficulties? How many times have we tried to explain to him that it is impossible immediately to have the better conditions which he desires? How many times have we told him that it is impossible to have equality here?

"Smith wants everybody to have the same privileges which he has. He wants all untrained and unqualified workers to live the same as we, who went through years of study in the party training school. He wants the ordinary workers to receive the same privileges as we who participated in the Revolution. By this attitude Smith shows that he is not worthy of the privileges extended to him. We were fools not to have chased him out long ago.

"We thought that eventually Smith would find out that his ideas of equality were impossible. We did everything to convince him. We made him an engineer. We gave him the highest form of food and supplies. We even promised him a higher position and two rooms instead of one. And how does he pay us back now? By sending us a counter-revolutionary document like this!

"I cannot understand what Smith will do in the United States, where the people are starving. Let Smith explain this to us. We will give him one last chance now to withdraw the counter-revolutionary statements made in his letter. Smith, you must decide now whether you want to remain here or not. Of course, the party can never give you permission to return since you were sent here by the American Communist Party as a party member, to remain here permanently. If we did this we would be justly criticised by the Communist International."

I was so nervous that I was afraid that I would not do myself justice. But I tried to gather courage and strength from the fact that I held the trump card in my hand—my party book. The gathering waited eagerly for some expression of penitence or apology, as I rose to speak.

"I stand by everything I wrote in my letter," I said bluntly, omitting the word "comrades" according to the precedent which Polkin had set. "If the party cannot give me a pass to return, then I will go as non-party. Here is my party book."

I advanced to the platform and placed on the table the party book which I had held since 1919. In sheer amazement the gathering arose as if by word of command at my unexpected action. To cast aside so lightly the much-sought-for and highly privileged position of a party member, was, for them, a most unusual and astonishing thing to do.

"Since Polkin complains so bitterly about the trouble I have given the party," I continued, "I will free the party of this trouble. If you have not succeeded in convincing me in three years, I am afraid you will never convince me. If I do not go back to America to inform the workers of what kind of Com-

munism you are practising here, that would be a crime on my part, a crime against the workers and a crime against my principles."

Polkin was beside himself. He buzzed about the stenographer's table crying, "Put that down! Did you get that?" The poor girl sought to wave him off as if he were some pestiferous insect annoying her.

I was warming up and losing some of my nervousness as I continued:

"Since I first started to work, I have been struggling for my class, struggling for a better life for the workers. That better life I thought I would find here. And what did I find instead? It is now seventeen years since the Revolution, and yet things are getting steadily worse. Three years ago, when I first arrived, it was not as bad as it is now. You have established a reign of terror instead of a workers' government. Members of any opposition are murdered in cold blood. Thousands of honest, innocent people were exiled to prison camps or shot, on account of the Kirov assassination, people who had nothing to do with the crime and who did not know what it was all about. Do you think you can keep the opposition in check with such methods?

"Tell me if you know of any Revolution in the history of the world, which maintained a government by terror for seventeen years! Tell me, how can you expect to make a revolution in other countries, when in this country, the so-called workers' republic, where the workers are supposed to be free, millions die of hunger? How can you expect the workers of other lands to follow your example when you shoot down like a rat anyone who does not agree with such a system?

"As a Communist, as a party member I can no longer assume responsibility before my fellow-workers for what I have witnessed here. I can no longer participate in a system which maintains itself in power by murdering innocent people. You knew my opinion from the very beginning, when I first arrived. It is impossible to cure me of these opinions. Explanations and promises will do no good any more. It is impossible for

me to change your system, so it would be best if you let me go back immediately."

"But why do you think nothing more can be done? What would you have us to do to persuade you to remain?" interrupted Liberov.

"Yes, yes!" added Polkin, in parrot fashion, "that is what we want to know. Speak on that, will you?"

"You do not want to hear what I have to say, and besides you would not agree with me anyway," I replied. "It would take me a month to tell you all that is on my mind. But answer this question at least, why don't you give me the same *talon* (food book) as the Russian workers receive?"

"Is that all you want?" queried Polkin in astonishment.

"Yes," I said. "But that is not all. I want you party members to do the same, to give up all your privileges, and live as the Russian workers. Yes. And I want Comrade Stalin to do the same. Then I will remain in the Soviet Union." Satirical laughter greeted this proposal, and I continued:

"So far I see no signs that you intend to give up your privileges. Therefore, I have no faith in your Communism. My wife and I are ready at any time to live as poorly as any worker, but only on condition that everybody receives the same treatment. That is all. I am through."

When I sat down, the storm which had been gathering during my remarks burst forth in full strength. One cried out: "The dirty — never deserved the privileges we gave him."

Another exclaimed, "That's a fine idea, isn't it? How can we give up the privileges when we are worth more to the Soviet Union than the rest of the people? How many pairs of pants did we wear out in the party school until we reached this position? And you want us to give all that up now?"

In order to prepare a real barrage of attack upon me, all the spies and stool-pigeons from other departments had been invited to the meeting, including a number of Hungarian toadies with whom I had been in constant controversy.

There was Tengerdy, who shook his finger at me and shouted, "Such as you are, Smith, and millions like you who do not

know the party line, such workers who know nothing, can do without privileges. You don't deserve them. But as for us we are entitled to these things."

Wikkukel followed with another attack:

"Smith never was any better than he is now. Many times I called this to the attention of the party. Now you can hear for yourself what he is. He is writing to America attacking our system. He is trying to weaken our influences among the foreign workers, trying to turn them against the party and the Soviet Union. He came here thinking to find Socialism ready for him. This man is not politically educated enough to understand our situation. How can anyone think of Comrade Stalin getting as much as an ordinary worker? Ridiculous! How can anyone compare that great man with an ordinary worker? And this man Smith even has the nerve to write to Stalin, to bother such a busy man with his crazy letters."

As the discussion proceeded among the smaller fry, it gradually descended to lower and lower levels until with Baumann it hit the bottom. Baumann was a German of about fifty-five, who worked as a master in the assembly department. His wife was a sweet woman who was loved by everybody in the German colony.

Baumann now took the floor to attack me. He said:

"I knew all along that Smith was not a good Communist. He is always making trouble for everybody. For example, he attacked me when I changed my wife for another. He thinks he is in a capitalist country instead of in a land of freedom. Nobody can tell us whom to live with. Here we are all free. I don't have to slave for my wife and she doesn't have to slave for me. Here everyone does as he pleases, women as well as men. If Smith does not like such freedom he can go to hell."

The women in the audience applauded loudly and cried, "Baumann is right. Here we have freedom."

"What Baumann says is true," echoed R\_\_\_\_\_, a German toolmaker who had chased out his first wife and had selected a young Komsomol for his new mate. "He tried to scare the girls away from me because I was married. Now I have

taken another wife and we are happy together. My first wife has taken another man and they are happy too. Smith is doing nothing but trying to discredit everybody. It would be much better if he went back to capitalistic America, where he belongs."

During these disgraceful speeches I could hardly contain my laughter and open contempt. It was bad enough that they fought desperately to defend their ill-gotten privileges on political and economic grounds. But to see in the Communist system nothing more than an opportunity to get more women was most disgusting. I could well conceive that the moral and social standards of Al Capone or of any street corner loafer could not reach any lower depths.

Polkin was highly enraged by my laughter. "What are you laughing at?" he cried furiously. "Can't you stand it when Communists tell the truth about you? You should be ashamed instead of laughing. They are real Communists and real comrades. They understand the value of freedom. They understand human nature. Are you against human nature?"

I demanded the floor, but Polkin refused. Thereupon I threatened to leave the meeting and Polkin finally consented to let me speak.

"Comrades," I said, "the discussion has turned to the question of my attitude on morality. Let me say that if you believe that immorality and loose living is natural and Communistic, then I detest such Communism. Some day you may regret the abuses you are carrying on in the name of human nature and Communism. I noticed that the hospitals are filled with your people suffering from all kinds of filthy diseases.

"You call this freedom! Very well, you can keep such freedom for yourselves. I have not yet become such a Communist that I can believe in freedom of this kind. I will have nothing to do with the kind of Communist freedom which is responsible for filling the clinics and hospitals with our younger generation to cripple them for the rest of their lives. This alone is reason enough for me to leave this unfortunate country."

"Very well," cried Polkin, "we will give you a good passport."

"I don't need your passport," I retorted. "I have a damn good American passport."

Polkin then asked who wanted the floor. A number of the more serious comrades spoke, attacking my views and raising the discussion to a higher political level. The general opinion seemed to be that the sooner they got rid of me the better.

After the discussion was closed Liberov presented a resolution:

We the party members of the tool department of the *ATE* factory, have decided that Smith must be sent back to the United States. We find that he is an incorrigible, dissatisfied element interested only in agitating against the party and the Soviet Union. He is a black sheep who must be separated from the rest of the flock to avoid contamination. We demand from the higher bodies of the party that action be taken so that Smith shall not go back as a party member.

We call upon the Hungarian comrades and the Slovakian comrades to notify all comrades in the United States about Smith's activities here. It is our opinion, furthermore, that the American Communist Party should not take him back because we can expect no good to come from him. The American Communist Party should notify all workers not to believe Smith and to have nothing to do with him.

We denounce Smith as a traitor to the Communist Party and the Soviet Union. From the very beginning he showed himself as an enemy of our beloved leader, Comrade Stalin. He is not a Communist but an anarchist, who is opposed to all political activity. We demand also that Maria Smith be sent back to America as a non-Communist. She too does not agree with our policies although we gave her every privilege free, in spite of the fact that she is not a working woman. She has denounced our glorious Sanatoria as nothing but houses of prostitution.

Someone suggested that I be given the floor before the resolution was voted upon. This was the usual custom in such cases, but it had slipped Polkin's mind for some reason or other. Grudgingly, Polkin granted me the floor for a few remarks.

"Comrades," I said, "I notice that you had this resolution all prepared in advance, in spite of all your talk about trying to convince me. I am not afraid of this resolution. It can do me no harm. The American Communist Party has slight influences among the American workers anyway and the resolution will hardly stop me from reaching them with the truth. They are just a bunch of swindlers who took away my life's savings. They knew very well that I would not be able to stand the system here, but they did not think I would be able to come back. Unfortunately for them America has recognized the Soviet Union, which makes it possible for me to return without difficulty. You can rest assured that in spite of your resolution, I shall continue my fight for right and freedom. I shall always do my best to help the poor Russian people, to whom I shall always be loyal. So, go ahead with your vote. It makes no difference to me."

As the vote was taken—of course it was unanimously in favour of the resolution—Wikkukel tapped his chest significantly and remarked:

"The American workers will not believe you. We, Hungarian comrades, will take care of that."

"We will see," I said as I left.

When I got home late that night and told my wife the news she clapped her hands with joy. She could hardly believe it was true.

## CHAPTER XLI

### FREE AT LAST

ON the following day, February 3rd, I did not report at the factory, but set about making preparations for my return. I sent in my application to the Foreign Bureau asking for immediate action. But it seemed that I had misjudged the situation completely.

First of all I was soon to learn that workers in Russia cannot just quit their jobs as I did, in the usual American fashion. They can be fired but they cannot quit. Leaving a job is looked upon with severe disapproval, as desertion from the post of duty. Before a worker is permitted to leave a factory for any reason whatever, he must obtain the approval of countless secretaries, directors and bureaus. If he has in mind quitting work altogether, let us say because of low pay or objectionable conditions, he faces the threat of losing his bread card. If on the other hand he has in mind seeking another more desirable position elsewhere, he must have the necessary discharge papers from his previous place of employment. In either case the word of the various bureaus and secretaries of the factory of his original employment, is decisive. In this way the Soviet Government has bound the workers securely to their enslavement.

Secondly, I soon became aware of the fact that the speeches and the resolutions of the last party meeting were not to be taken seriously. In fact, they had been intended to intimidate me and, in part, they were the result of a somewhat hasty reaction to my sharp letter. The action taken was, of course, utterly contrary to the line laid down by the Central Committee as to the attitude to be taken towards me. Nor did the party

officials believe for a moment that I might take their statements and denunciations at their face value. The fact of the matter is that their attacks had given me just the opening I had been looking for.

When it was found that I had failed to report for duty there was consternation among the party officials in the factory. I approached Sklar in charge of the Foreign Bureau in regard to my application. He began the process of persuasion and conversion all over again.

"You should not do that," he urged. "Why don't you go to work? We all thought you would think it over and change your mind."

"Never mind that!" I replied. "Just fix up my application as soon as possible."

Finding that he could make no further impression upon me, he instructed me to report on February 5th to Chasin, then the director of the department.

"Why didn't you report to work?" Chasin asked as soon as he saw me. "You should know our system. You should know that you cannot quit that way. You know that it is not according to our law. What shall I do with you? I shall have to give you a *progul* (statement charging failure to report to work, or loafing). What report can I make on this? What can I write on your discharge slip?"

"You can write anything you want," I said unceremoniously, "I'm through!"

"Well, you will have to get an order from Polkin first," he declared.

"What have I to do with Polkin?" I cried. "I am no longer a party member. I am no longer subject to Communist discipline."

"Oh, yes you are," purred Chasin in honeyed tones. "Do you think we paid any attention to your turning in your party book, the other day? Nonsense. You see, that was not *official*. You had better see Polkin immediately. He wants to see you."

I was becoming heartily sick of the endless merry-go-round, but, I thought, I probably had to go through with it all, anyway, to get what I wanted, so I followed his advice.

As soon as I entered Polkin's office, he offered me my party book. In response to my look of inquiry, he explained:

"That is not the way to deal with the party. Such matters should be handled by *zayavlenye* (in an official manner, in writing)."

"Very well," I said impatiently, "just give me a piece of paper and I'll settle it in a moment."

"But why be so hasty, comrade?" he insisted. "Everything can be straightened out, you know. Forget all that the comrades said against you the other day. After all, they are just *duraki!* (fools)."

"That's news to me," I replied. "In that case you must be a *durak* yourself, since you attacked me more than anybody else."

"Well, you know how it is, comrade," he continued apologetically. "We can all make mistakes. After all, yours is a special case. Sometimes things do not run as smoothly as we would like. And besides, your case is being handled by the Central Committee."

"You mean to say I can't drop the party?" I asked.

Again he evaded a direct answer. "Your case is different, you must understand, since you were sent here by the American Communist Party. I might have some trouble about your case myself. You think it is so easy to drop such an old revolutionist as you are?"

Polkin must have been called on the carpet for violating the official instructions regarding how my case was to be handled, I thought to myself. Is he telling me his difficulties to win my sympathy? Was he trying to flatter me in order to get him out of an official scrape? Of course, that was it. I determined not to retreat one inch.

"That's your affair," I said. "It makes no difference to me. You'd better not place any more difficulties in my way. So far, I have not gone to the American Consul. If things do not go smoothly here, I still have other means of getting what I want. So, just watch your step."

My last remark bowled him over completely. With a deep sigh he reached for the telephone and called up Chasin. "Let

Smith have his pass," he muttered. "Give him a *prokul* stating that he violated the rules of the factory by absenting himself from work without permission."

As I passed through the corridor on my way from Polkin's office, worker after worker stopped me to shake my hand. Some slapped me on the shoulder and said, "*Molodetz*" (Good boy). Others urged me not to forget them and to send them cards from the United States. "We know you will not keep quiet. We know you will not forget us," they said. My closest friends in the opposition group wisely kept their distance. But their jubilation, their farewells and their good wishes one could read in their eyes. The strategy they had laid out for me had worked to perfection.

One of the highest officials in the factory, one whose name I cannot mention, called me to his office as I was taking my leave. I will call him Y—. I had never had an opportunity to speak to him previously, and I had had no way of knowing his opinions.

Y— invited me to take a chair as he began to speak:

"Comrade Smith, I have never had a chance to speak to you. In fact, I hesitated for fear of the consequences but I must speak to you now regardless of what happens. I know you will understand my position. I know all about your opinions from your speeches at party meetings. Personally, I never believed you would get away with it. I never believed they would let you free to return to the United States. I thought that sooner or later they would knock you down somewhere. But I am glad now that everything is settled for your return. Nevertheless, you must still be watchful until you are over the border. They may still make some attempt against you. Please, please, for your sake and the sake of the Russian people, be careful."

His voice choked as he shook my hand. "Please speak the truth," he said. "Tell what you have found here. Be unsparing in your efforts to inform the American people of the system we have here, for the establishment of which so much blood was shed during the Revolution. Tell them how our workers'

government treats the Russian people and what freedom we have here. I am sure that you will help us very much over there. You see how helpless we are, until something happens. Then I assure you we will know which way to turn our guns. I have a deep conviction that you will return to Russia some day—after the next Revolution. Until then good-bye, and remember me."

I left his office to attend to the thousand and one details which I had to take care of in connection with my departure. I had to straighten out my tool account and my obligation (Government loan). I had to arrange to get my back pay. I ran around from place to place to sell whatever clothes and possessions I did not need for my journey, so as to raise as much money as possible. Just as I thought I had everything settled, I received a phone call from Liberov on February 11th.

"We have been looking for you high and low," he said. "We sent messengers for you everywhere. You must without fail come to the party meeting to-night."

"What the hell do you people want of me?" I shouted into the receiver. "I am not a party member any more. Why don't you leave me alone?"

"You are wrong, comrade," said Liberov. "You are still a party member. That matter has not yet been approved by the higher bodies."

"But I have no party book, or a pass!" I exclaimed.

"That means nothing," he said. "We will phone the watchman to admit you without a pass or a party book. We have been waiting for you since five o'clock. Come right up."

"Why can't you come here?" I asked. "Why must I go there?" It was already nine o'clock in the evening and I did not relish taking the trip to the factory alone after the warnings I had received.

Liberov would not be dissuaded. "There is a big meeting here," he said. "You must come at once to the main party office at the Elektrozavod. It may be worse for you if you do not come."

Fearful of what his threat implied I rushed off without supper. My wife was terrified and urged me not to go. "You will be killed on the street," she said.

When I entered the office I found assembled there about forty people including the leading party officials of the entire factory, the directors, secretaries and chief propagandists. Kulakov was in the chair. He was now the chief party secretary for the Elektrozavod, Jurov having been sent to the Volga Canal district by the Political Department. The leading party officials were being constantly rotated from place to place, probably with the object of preventing them from creating too strong a personal machine or following. What this awe-inspiring gathering wanted of me now, after I had sold most of my effects, I could not imagine.

"Comrade Smith," Kulakov began in amiable tones, "it is impossible for us to believe what we have heard about you. What are you doing, anyhow? Such a thing has never been done before, especially by a Communist. We have made an exception in your case because you are a foreigner. You must consider the trouble your wife will have on account of our difficulties with you. Dear comrade, I beg of you! Don't leave us now. We have great need of you. You can rest assured that we will never be angry at you again. We understand your position. We understand how hard it is for you to accustom yourself to conditions here. We know how well you lived in the United States. We know that you gave up everything you had to the American Communist Party. We therefore feel responsible for you. We want to take care of you.

"You can do much for the Russian workers if you will remain here. If you leave we will lose much. You will hurt our movement. Even if you say nothing bad about the Soviet Union when you return, it will be a blow to our Workers' Fatherland for everyone knows that the best privileges were enjoyed by you here. Everyone knows your record and they will draw harmful conclusions. Comrade Riabov, you know Comrade Smith well. Suppose you tell us your opinion."

I could not believe that these important party officials could be so wanting in dignity and self-respect as to adopt such an obsequious attitude toward me, unless there was some important motive behind it all. The only explanation I could think of was that the Central Committee had raked them all over the coals for letting me go. I believe also that the American representative to the Comintern, in the interests of the American Communist Party, was actively pulling the wires to prevent my departure at all costs.

Riabov was even more effusive in his friendliness. He said:

"I know better than anyone what Comrade Smith wants. He wants everybody to have things good. For instance, the other day he brought to my office an American woman worker in our lamp factory (Sophie Hornyak), with a statement of her earnings and a list of her expenses. He explained to me that she could not get along and asked that something be done for her. He asked me to get in touch with Petrofsky, the director of the Combinat, about the case. I promised to take care of the matter, but in the rush of other things I forgot it completely. That was a serious error on my part."

How ready they were to prostrate themselves before me, if only I consented once again to place myself in their clutches!

"And these are the questions which are worrying Comrade Smith," continued Riabov. "These little questions mean much to him. What shall we do with such a man?

"Comrades, I think I have a solution for this problem. Suppose we place Smith in a position where he can handle such cases himself? Of course, we would have to pay him in accordance with the importance of the job. Smith is just the man for such a position. He is sympathetic with the workers. The fact of the matter is that we made a big mistake not to give him such a job immediately. In a place of that kind, where he can help the workers, Smith will be happy. The trouble is that now he has no chance to help them. Because of his sympathetic nature, he finds himself in a continuous struggle for better conditions for his fellow-workers. That is why he is dissatisfied. But I believe that if we give Comrade Smith this

position, he will forget all about his complaints and render very valuable service."

"Well, Comrade Smith," said Kulakov jovially, when Riabov had concluded, "what do you say now? You see how hard we try to do everything to please you. Comrade Riabov has spoken most sensibly I believe. In fact, we are all of his opinion. What do you think, Comrade Smith?"

Of course I smelled a rat behind this benevolent offer which had undoubtedly been figured out in the secret caucus beforehand. At this late date, with most of my belongings sold, I was in no mood to swallow the bait which was being held out to me.

"That is all very nice," I said, "but I am afraid that I cannot accept your offer. Even if I should want to accept, I am not alone. You know what a struggle I have had trying to cure my wife of her illness. We are both convinced that she will get better only in the United States. That is one reason why I cannot accept.

"In the second place, I must say frankly that I have no faith in your proposal. What could I do to help the workers here? Could I divide my *talon* among them all? I have told you many times that conditions here are not the result of the action of any individual in the factory. It is the system which is at fault, the system under which one lives well, while millions have nothing, and starve.

"No matter what job you give me, I will still be dissatisfied and therefore I must return. What good is the fine job and the high wages you offer me, if I cannot enjoy them in the face of the misery which I see all around me? It is true that everything is not milk and honey in America, but at least I will not be living off the backs of my fellow-workers."

"He must be a Fascist!" I heard someone exclaim at this point.

I turned in the direction of the speaker and said:

"If that is Fascism, then I'm a Fascist. I believe I will not now or ever agree with any dictatorship which is against the workers.

"Nowhere can you find things as bad as they are here," I continued. "Last year I went to Riga, in Latvia, to have my passport renewed. It is just a handful of a country, and yet it looked to me like a little paradise in comparison with the Soviet Union. Everybody was well-dressed. The people in the street looked so well-fed and healthy in comparison with the people here.

"I spoke to some of the workers I met in Riga in praise of the Soviet Union and they laughed at me and attacked me. 'Do you think we do not know what is happening there?' said one. 'Many of us come from there. I ran away from one of their kolhozi myself. Do you think that we don't know about the starvation and the suffering and about the shooting of innocent people. Do you think we don't know about the Gay Payoo factories and concentration camps in which millions of workers are enslaved?' That is the attitude of the workers outside toward the Soviet Union. As a direct result of what you are doing here, the workers of other countries are going to Fascism."

With these remarks, Kulakov's kindly smile melted away and a heavy scowl took its place. He stopped me at this point, shouting, "Sit down! That's enough!" He turned to the stenographer to make sure that she had taken down my speech in full.

Polkin now saw his opportunity for vindication. He immediately took the floor.

"Now, comrades, you see what the situation is! You raised hell with me because I did not convince Smith. You thought I was too hasty with him. Now you see you can do nothing with this rotten son of a bitch. I'd like to kill the damn skunk! How can you speak like that?" he shouted, rushing at me with blood in his eyes. There would have been a fight, if Kulakov had not restrained Polkin and shut him up quickly. Kulakov was in difficulties clearly enough, but he was not prepared to involve himself in greater difficulties through some hasty and irresponsible act of an individual.

Kulakov took the floor again but this time his glances in

my direction were like daggers. "I see no hope in this fellow," he said. "He seems to be getting worse and worse. There is nothing more to be done. You may sit here, Smith, or you may go."

I was afraid that this might be a hint to someone to waylay me on my way home. So I waited until 1 a.m., the quitting time of the next shift, to go home with a friend.

In spite of the failure of previous efforts to win me back to the party fold, committee after committee and delegation after delegation visited my home every day. On February 20th, I was notified by Liberov and Sklar that I must appear at the District Office on the Baumannskaya. When I got there I found not only the leading functionaries of the Elektrozavod, but those of the entire Stalin Rayon in which our factory was located. Among those present were Kulakov, Riabov, Petrofsky, Liberov, Polkin, Naumov, Brodskaya, Tzeitlin and a number of others.

Polkin and Kulakov reviewed the chief points of my case, with which the majority of those present were familiar. In closing his report, Kulakov said:

"If Smith criticised the American Government the way he criticises us here, he would long ago have died on the electric chair. There is no remedy I can see in this case."

Naumov followed him:

"I know Smith from the last party cleaning," he said. "At that time there were several complaints charging him with counter-revolutionary propaganda. The case was reported to the Central Committee and this body has given us instructions regarding our attitude toward Smith. These instructions we have followed but it seems without success.

"You cannot imagine how things have changed in the factory since Smith came. When I come to the office, I find a line of workers waiting for me with complaints. This never happened before. But Smith began going around to the Russian workers and the foreign workers urging them to protest against everything, and giving them instructions as to how to go about it. In my opinion you had better let him go to the devil, and the

sooner the better. In America they will soon teach him to shut up. Yes," added Naumov, "if he criticises Roosevelt they will know what to do with him."

But the instructions of the Central Committee hung over them like a sword of Damocles and they therefore still refused to give up the hopeless attempt at reconciliation.

Riabov again held out the olive branch:

"I still believe in Comrade Smith. I still think we can reach an understanding with him. You must consider his temperament. You must take into consideration that he has trouble at home with his wife. Perhaps it would be better if his wife associated with our women, who are more class-conscious.

"I am sorry for you, Comrade Smith. But if you will listen and remain here, everything will be all right. We will help you fight for the workers. You are not in your right place as an engineer. We will get a better job for you, where you can orientate yourself better. That is where we made our mistake, comrade."

When the District Secretary asked me for my opinion on Riabov's suggestion regarding my wife's future companions, I said simply, "My wife would never associate with such ladies."

Then the secretary wanted to know if I was a Trotskyist or a syndicalist. I told him I had always fought these tendencies in the United States.

"That is impossible," he said. "You are no true defender of the Stalin line. The Communist Party should mean more to you than your wife. Look at Comrade Stalin. He lost one wife in the Caucasus. Recently his second wife was buried. Does that shake his determination to follow the party line? No! But with you it is different. Your wife comes first. You were never a Communist in my opinion. There is nothing we can do with him, comrades. Let him go to the United States. You can go, Smith. The American Consul is waiting for you."

I thanked them and left the room.

On February 24th, my wife was visited at home by a committee. They cross-examined her, but they quickly gave her up as a hopeless counter-revolutionist, and took away her party membership card.

Finally, on February 28th, after we had sold out everything—even our beds—after we had purchased our railroad and steamship tickets, I was instructed to report to the Moscow Committee at two in the afternoon. “Will these damn committees never end?” I said to myself as I started for the meeting, hoping against hope that this would be the last. Luckily there were only three present this time, namely: Tzeitlin, Brodskaya and my old friend, Polkin. I consoled myself with the thought that this would surely be a short meeting, since there would only be four speeches, including my own.

“Comrade Smith,” began Brodskaya, “will you tell us briefly just what it is you don’t like here?”

I was flabbergasted. “What do you want, a lecture?” I asked. “Haven’t you heard enough?”

“We want you to tell us your ideas in brief just once more. Perhaps we can learn from them our mistakes,” insisted Brodskaya. They were just trying to draw me out, of course, in the hope that some hopeful path of reconciliation would reveal itself.

“All right, then,” I said. I made up my mind that this would be my final blast and I determined to make it as devastating as I could. “There are certain things which are going on here which I, as an American Communist, cannot understand. For instance, in the American Communist Party we learned to fight against the piece-work system, while here we have the piece-work system in all factories.

“In America the Communists raised the slogan of the six-hour day while in the Soviet Union you have a sixteen and seventeen-hour day, if you count the seven hours regular labour and the ten hours *subotnik*, which is actually compulsory. Some of the Russian workers actually work in two factories in order to make ends meet.

"In the United States the party fights for relief for the unemployed, while in the Soviet Union the unemployed get nothing from the Government. Even those who work are without sufficient food.

"In the United States, the Communists demand free lunches for children. Yet in the Soviet Union, even the lowest paid category of workers, receiving as little as forty roubles a month, must pay a minimum of ten roubles a month for a child's lunch, and this lunch usually consists of some dish-water and a piece of black bread.

"We also fought for the protection of women in industry, in America. Yet, what protection do women have here? They do the roughest, most arduous kind of manual labour and receive the lowest wage scale. So low is the economic status of women in the Soviet Union, that many of them are forced to prostitute themselves in order to earn enough for their needs.

"The Communist Party of America stands for old-age pensions, yet here we find the aged and even the crippled forced to work on whatever they can do, because the pensions are so small that they will buy next to nothing.

"How does it happen that one of the main Communist planks in America is the abolition of child labour and yet you have children of tender ages working long hours at heavy labour on the *sovhozi* and the *kolhozi*, while here in the city you will find thousands of children on the streets as early as five in the morning speculating or begging?

"In America the Communists fight everywhere for freedom of speech, Press and assembly. Yet in the Soviet Union there is no free speech, free Press or freedom of assembly anywhere. There is no opportunity for the expression of opinion by the people. Any opposition is wiped out by the firing squad.

"The Communists in the United States are agitating actively against Hitler because of his religious persecution of the Jews and Catholics, while here you transform the churches into stables You punish those who lead or organise religious

activities. Your Komsomols throw mud and stones through the church windows.

"In the United States the Communists lead strikes and try to organise the workers for better conditions. Let anyone try to organise the workers or lead a strike here against your starvation wages and you know what will happen to him!

"The American Communists are active in organising the small-home owners and farmers who are unable to pay their mortgages, urging them not to surrender their homes to the capitalists and bankers. In the Soviet Union you have expropriated every poor peasant, who owes you nothing. You have taken away his home, his land, his cattle, his products and his plough and you have left him to starve.

"In America, also, the Communists organise the tenants to fight against evictions. Here you evict a worker even if he pays his rent, to make room for some member of the privileged bureaucracy.

"The Communist Party of the United States condemns Hitler and Mussolini for persecuting and destroying every form of political opposition. Then why do you shoot down the opposition without even a trial?

"In the Soviet Union the workers have to pay for every little scrap of paper and for every little privilege, for a *talon*, for a bread card, for admission to the park or to the museum. What an outcry the Communists would make if this happened in the United States! On the other side of the border nobody would dream of paying for such things.

"It seems to me, as a simple, class-conscious worker, that everything which I learned to hate and fight in the United States I find entrenched in its worst form in the Soviet Union. And what is more, nobody is allowed to speak against these evils in the Soviet Union, the Workers' Republic. Perhaps you can explain these matters to me. Do you want me to tell you any more?"

"That's enough!" said Brodskaya brusquely. "That is not what we expected from you. Only after we have established Socialism will we have things here like in America."

"Then what is the Communist Party fighting for in America?" I asked.

But she refused to be led into this line of discussion.

"Let me speak of the main question now," she urged. "Tell us what we can do to induce you to remain here?"

"You can do nothing," I said. "I have sold all my household effects, even my furniture. My baggage is already on the border. I have purchased my railroad and steamship tickets. Why do you bother me now?"

"We will buy you new furniture and replace everything you have sold," interrupted Brodskaya.

"Do you expect me to come back and work with such people as Polkin, who tried to choke me at a meeting?" I continued. "I would not work here if you gave me the position of Stalin himself. The time will come when the workers will pay you back. But I do not want to witness the anger of the people, when they revolt and take a terrible revenge upon those responsible for their sufferings. So, let us not waste any more time. I have much to do. Good-bye." I left without waiting for any further questions.

When I got home my wife was busy sewing the documents, some of which you see reproduced in this book, into the lining of my garments.

Hard as it is to believe, on March 2nd, we found ourselves on the Polish border at the little town of Nigoreloe. The ride to the border had been a most unusual one. The occupants of our second-class carriage, mostly foreigners, said not a word. Not a sound of singing or laughter was to be heard. Each one kept to himself. They sat open-eyed and silent or dozed in their seats. The train was like a graveyard. Were they all as fearful as I that some unfortunate accident might force them back again into unhappy Russia? It was common knowledge that there were many Gay Payoo agents about. Silence, therefore, was golden.

The Soviet Customs officials searched my luggage with unusual thoroughness. To disarm them I gave up voluntarily a number of documents which I had little use for, in the hope

that they would not take it into their heads to examine the lining of my clothing. I was so nervous during this examination that my trembling fingers could hardly open my bags.

As soon as we crossed the border it was as if we had suddenly been released from some dark, terrifying jail into the bright golden sunlight. The passengers broke out into lively conversation and ecstatic cries of joy, of freedom. They laughed, they cried, they sang. They offered to buy us drinks and refreshments.

My wife was bubbling with happiness. "It is like going from Hell to Heaven, Andrew," she said. "I feel a thousand per cent. better already."

After we had had some refreshments the guard told us to go back to the same car. My wife became somewhat panicky. "What are you doing?" she asked fearfully. "Taking us back to Russia?"

The guard grinned reassuringly. "Don't be afraid," he said, "you just have to travel a little further in this car to the dépôt."

When we reached the dépôt, which was on Polish soil, and transferred to a third-class train of the railroad to Warsaw, it was like another world. The car was as clean as a pin. For the first time in three years we saw ordinary working people clean, well-dressed and well-fed. Every woman wore a hat and a neat dress. Gone were the rags and filth of that other world of misery and tears. No more did the doleful cry, "Chlebushka! Chlebushka!" ring in our ears at each station.

We were free at last.

THE END

## **PHOTOGRAPHS AND DOCUMENTS**

РЕКОМЕНДАЦИЯ.

Уважаемые товарищи! Просим разрешить тов. Эндрю СМITH  
остаться в Советском Союзе, так как он прислан сюда американской  
партией, которая дала ему перевод. Он - член коммунистической пар-  
тии с 1922 г. и опытный механик, который будет здесь действовать  
по целиком.

Просим предоставить ему помещение к питанию на несколько  
ближайших дней, под нашей ответственностью.

С товарищескими приветами:

АНГЛО-АМЕРИКАНСКАЯ СЕКЦИЯ ПРОФИНТЕРНА.  
американский представитель:

Правящие руки т. Овергаард уважаютъ  
Овергаард,

---

Letter of Recommendation

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3/10/32

RECOMMENDATION

Dear Comrades:

We beg permission for Comrade Andrew Smith to remain in the Soviet Union as he is sent here by the American party, which gave him a transfer. He is a member of the Communist Party since 1922 and an experienced mechanic who will be very valuable here.

We request that he be provided with quarters and food for the next few days on our responsibility. With comradely greetings,

Anglo-American Section of the Profintern  
A. OVERGAARD, American Representative.

БИРК 203 430, N.

Сегодня в Бирк 203 СМТ был передан коммунистическим  
организациям САСИ, активистом которых я являюсь с 1922 года.

Тов. СМТ высококвалифицированный механик и имеет полную  
квалификацию от Коммунистического профкома САСИ и от профкома  
автомобилей в Коминтерне и в Профинтерне.

Просьба оказала в союзнику СМТУ все возможные содействия  
для присвоения рабочих кварталов.

Англо-Американская Секция  
Профинтерна

Представитель Америки

V. Edwards

3/19/32 - Товарищу руки подать! Гончаров

Letter recommending Andrew Smith to the Elektrozavod

3/19/32

TO THE ELEKTROZAVOD

Comrade Andrew Smith was transferred here by the  
Communist Party of the United States, an active  
member of which he has been since 1922.

Comrade Smith is a highly qualified mechanic and  
has the best of references from the party in the  
United States and from their representatives in the  
Comintern and the Profintern.

We beg that Comrade Smith be extended all  
possible help in finding work and quarters.

Anglo-American Section of the Profintern

American Representative

V. EDWARDS

English Translation



«Соридлив не только не удаляет соревнования, а напротив, первые создает возможность применить его действительное широкое, действительно и массовое значение»  
(Ленин)

Таб. №

Фамилия Смит Альфред

Имя, отчество Альфред

Завод ЭМЗ Цех 331

Занимаемая долж. Ударник Произв. стаж 39

на данк. предпр. Партийность ОДК

Andrew Smith's Identification Book as a Worker in the Elektrozavod

июнь 1934г.

ЗАЩИЩЕН

ДОБРОЛЕДЕЙ

УДАРНИКА

Udarnik Card entitling the Holder to Special Privileges

МАРТ МЯСОЖИРОВОЙ  
ТАЛОН СЕРИЯ 11

УПРАВЛЕНИЕ ЭЛЕКТРОЧУДЫ  
МЯСОЖИРОВОЙ ТАЛОН  
НА МАРТ 1935 Г.

ФАМИЛИЯ .....  
Имя и отчество .....  
Кем выдан .....  
Место жительство .....

ПРИ УГЛАТЕ НЕ ВОЗОБНОВЛЯЕТСЯ

МАРТ МЯСОЖИРОВОЙ ТАЛОН 5	МАРТ МЯСОЖИРОВОЙ ТАЛОН 4
СЕРИЯ 1	СЕРИЯ 1

МАРТ МЯСОЖИРОВОЙ  
ТАЛОН СЕРИЯ 2

УПРАВЛЕНИЕ САЛОРНЫХ КНИЖЕК МОССОВЕТА  
МЯСОЖИРОВОЙ ТАЛОН  
НА МАРТ 1935 Г.

ФАМИЛИЯ .....  
Имя и отчество .....  
Кем выдан .....  
Место жительство .....

ПРИ УГЛАТЕ НЕ ВОЗОБНОВЛЯЕТСЯ

МАРТ МЯСОЖИРОВОЙ ТАЛОН 6	МАРТ МЯСОЖИРОВОЙ ТАЛОН 5	МАРТ МЯСОЖИРОВОЙ ТАЛОН 4
СЕРИЯ 2	СЕРИЯ 2	СЕРИЯ 2

Nos. 1 and 2 for Fats and Meats

Talon or Food Tickets

УПРАВЛЕНИЕ ЗАБОРНЫХ КНИЖЕК МОССОВЕТА  
ПРОДТАЛОН на ФЕВРАЛЬ и МАРТ 1935 г.

ФАМИЛИЯ .....  
Имя и отчество .....  
Кем выдан .....

ПРОДТАЛОН 3	ПРОДТАЛОН 4
1935 г.	1935 г.
ПРОДТАЛОН 5	ПРОДТАЛОН 6
1935 г.	1935 г.

УПРАВЛЕНИЕ ЗАБОРНЫХ КНИЖЕК МОССОВЕТА  
ПРОДТАЛОН на ФЕВРАЛЬ и МАРТ 1935 г.

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Имя и отчество .....  
Кем выдан .....

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1935 г.	1935 г.
ПРОДТАЛОН 5	ПРОДТАЛОН 6
1935 г.	1935 г.

Nos. 3 and 4 for General Products

## ХАРАКТЕРИСТИКА

Товарищ СМИТ член ВКП/С/ с 1932 г. /в Американской Компартии с 1922 г./ В настоящий момент работает на заводе АТЕ механиком по проверке оборудования. Товарищ СМИТ ведет активную работу среди иностранных рабочих. Кто производственная коммунистическая очередь внимательно относится к стачкам и мятежам. Интересуется общественно-политической жизнью завода, последовательно связана с заводской партийной ячейкой.

Товарищ СМИТ является одним из лучших инженерных рабочих и специалистов, правильно понимающих свою роль в участии в социалистическом строительстве.

Секретарь ячейки ВКП/С/ на заводе АТЕ.

/АХМАДУЛИН

25 мая 1933 г.

### "Andrew Smith's Characterization"

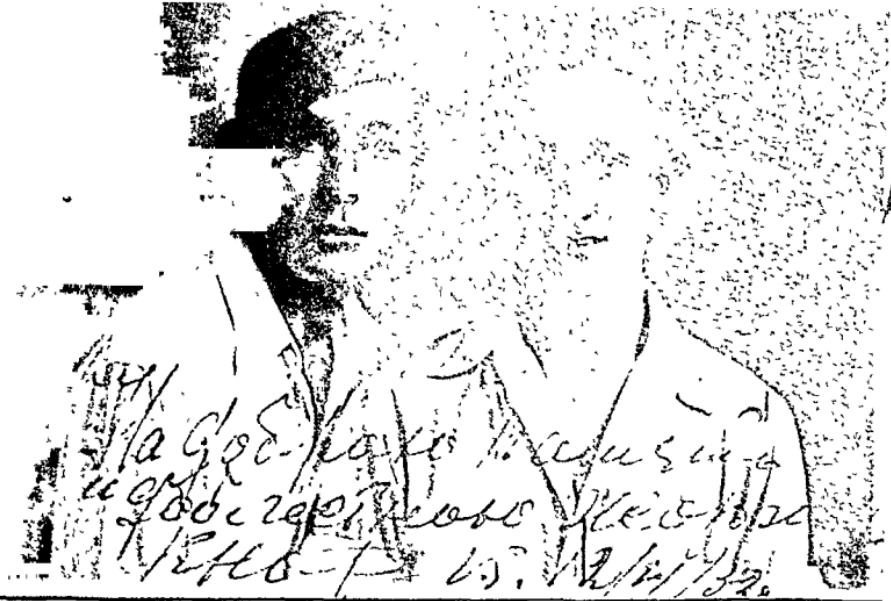
#### CHARACTERIZATION

Comrade Smith, member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union since 1932 (and member of the American Communist Party since 1922) is at present employed in the Electric Equipment factory as a mechanic inspecting machinery. Comrade Smith conducts effective activities among the foreign workers. As a Communist and producer, he pays the most serious attention to the lathes and machinery. He is interested in the social-political life of the plant and is daily identified with the work of the Communist Party "nucleus" at the plant.

Comrade Smith is one of the best foreign workers and specialists who correctly understands his share in the participation of Socialist construction.

Secretary of the Communist Party "nucleus" at the ATE (Electric Equipment Factory).  
May 19, 1933 (Signed) ACHMADULIN

English Translation



George Knotek (right) and a young Uzbek Friend before Knotek started work in the mines



George Knotek (left) and a Friend after  
a few strenuous weeks in the mines

В Э Т Электрозвод

Место: 21, Знаменская ул., 21  
Телефон 15-11

Справка № 494028

5 февраля 1935 г.

Лич представления 120 часов из рабочих.

Выдана пр.

СМ 2112 А. А.

и том, что он состоял на службе на Электрозводе с 20 марта  
1932 г. по 3 февраля 1935 г. № А 112 Э

отдела № 120 часов из рабочих с окладом  
заработной платы в размере 450 руб.

отставки (средний месячный  
зарплата 450 руб.)

Сдана в отделение № 25, 31 - 3611/7, раб. 40

делопроизв.

Г. Белова

CERTIFICATE OF EMPLOYMENT  
Issued on February 5, 1935, to show that  
Andrew Smith was employed at the  
"Elektrozavod" electric plant from  
March 20, 1932, to February 3, 1935, at  
an average monthly wage of 450 rubles.  
The certificate shows that he was dis-  
charged for failing to report to work.

**RENT RECEIPT**  
Issued to Andrew  
Smith on March  
12, 1935, in settle-  
ment for his Feb-  
ruary bill. It is  
itemized as fol-  
lows: Rent 23.50  
rubles; heat 11.78  
rubles; radio 2.50  
rubles; instalment  
on government  
loan for Maria  
Smith 10 rubles  
and water 2.80  
rubles. The total  
is 50 rubles and  
64 kopeks.



Maria Smith (front centre) with other patients  
at the Kalinin Sanatorium, Feodosia, Crimea



**Century Transportation Co., Inc.**  
113-115 BROAD STREET  
NEW YORK, N.Y.  
Tel.: BOWling Green 0-7375-7376-7377

158079

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Liability \$50.00 unless otherwise stated on back hereof

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Date 3/15/35

Received for Cartage \$\_\_\_\_\_

\$\_\_\_\_\_ Insurance \$\_\_\_\_\_

From S/S J. L. P. J. W. S.

Name John Johnson

Address 12 E 21<sup>st</sup> St

6.1.1

Collect \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Agent \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

With the exception of baggage of excessive weight, charge herein cover collection from and delivery to any part of premises except as rules of apartment houses, hotels and commercial buildings prevent.

**BEAR CONTRACT ON BACK OF THIS RECEIPT**

Baggage receipt upon his arrival on S.S. Hamburg